

August
2008

ANIMATIONTM MAGAZINE

Cartoon Network
Launches a New
Toon Think Tank



All Hail the
Comic-Book
Heroes

\$5.95 U.S. \$7.95 CAN



In an Animated Galaxy Far, Far Away:
**Journey to Star Wars:
The Clone Wars**



WONDER WOMAN™

**BATTLES ARES,
THE GOD OF WAR
IN AN ALL-NEW
DC UNIVERSE
ANIMATED
MOVIE**

**ON BLU-RAY
AND DVD
FEBRUARY 2009**

wonderwomanmovie.com

dccomics.com

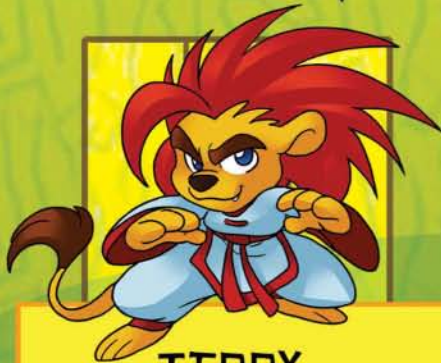
warnervideo.com

WONDER WOMAN and All Related Characters and Elements Are Trademarks of and © DC Comics.
© 2008 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.



THIS FILM IS
NOT YET RATED

TINY WARRIORS™



TERRY

STRONG AND BRAVE,
HIS MAIN TECHNIQUE IS
FAST HAND STRIKES.



JACKSON

THE FOCUSED ONE,
KNOWN FOR HIS FAST
AND FURIOUS KNOCK
OUT ATTACK.



PEGGY

SMART AND ALERT,
ALWAYS KEEN TO HER
SURROUNDINGS.



OSCAR

THE YOUNGEST,
TRUSTWORTHY AND
LOVEABLE, DON'T
UNDER ESTIMATE THE FURY
OF HIS STRIKES.



ZACHARY

ADVENTUROUS CHARACTER
ALWAYS SEEKING
KNOWLEDGE. CAN MAKE
LEAPS AND BOUNDS WITH
HIS RESOURCEFULNESS.



DEREK

DETERMINED AND
ANALYTICAL, CAN TAKE
DOWN THE LARGEST
OF OPPONENTS.



For more information: www.AnimationDC.com

"YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HORROR LOOK SO BEAUTIFUL"

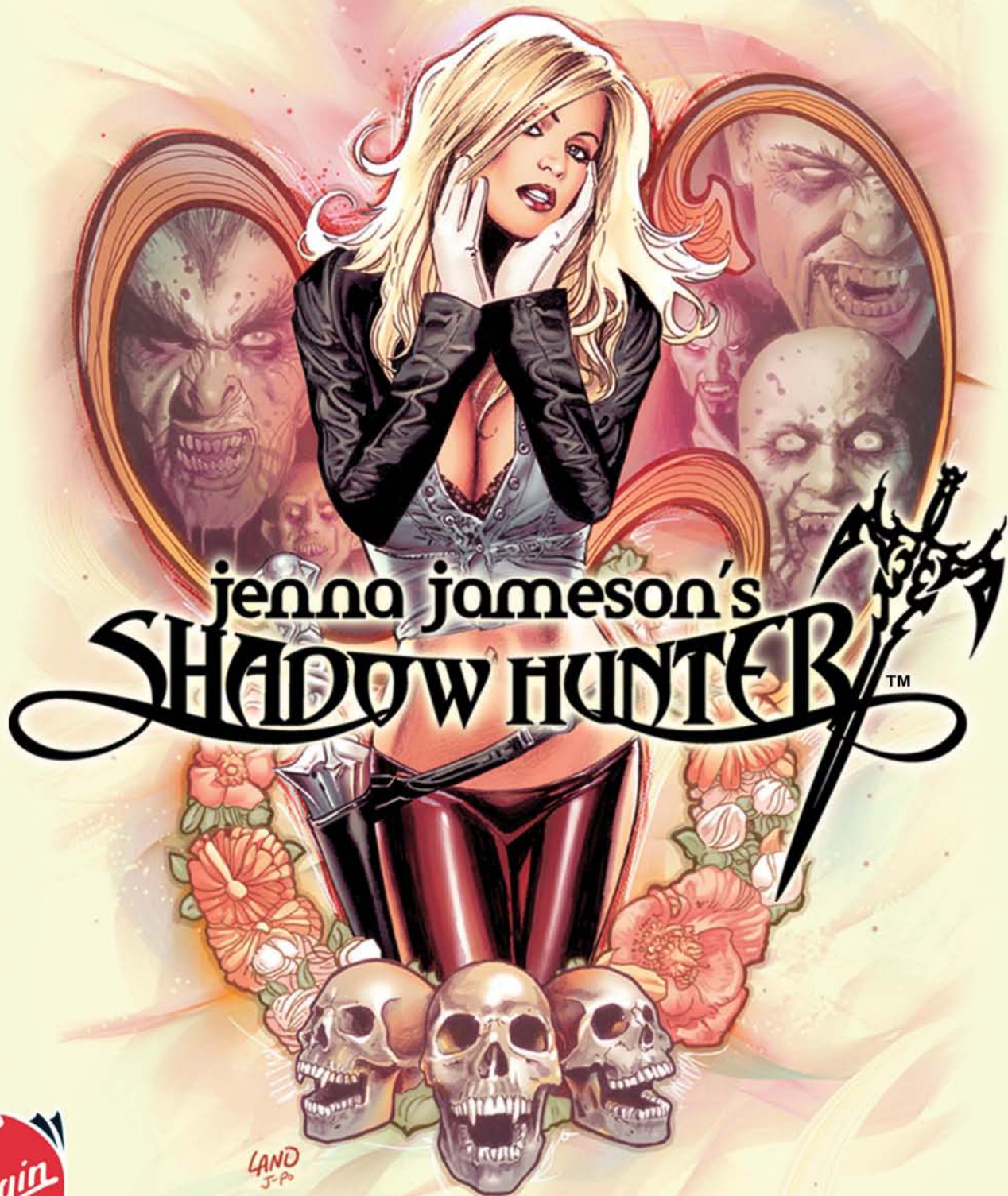
—The Pullbox

"WONDERFULLY CREEPY..."

—Pop Syndicate

"WOW! ★★★★★ STARS"

—Hero Spy



LAND
J-P



HARDCOVER COLLECTION

AT BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE



14

6 Frame-by-Frame

August Animation Planner ... Book We Love: Summer Reading ... Toons Sweep Daytime Emmys ... The Smurfs March to Sony.

10 Games

10 Heavy Metal. Gamers get their iron supplement in the form of SEGA's fresh new *Iron Man* release. [by Ryan Ball]

12 Still Lost in Blue. Konami and Hudson Soft double the fun in the latest survival adventure game for DS. [by Ryan Ball]

14 Feature

14 Animated Again, the Force Is.

Dave Filoni and his team convince George Lucas to debut the CG-animated *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* series in theaters first. [by Thomas J. McLean]

18 20 Comic-Book Movies to Keep an Eye on. Our annual list of the hottest upcoming features based on comic books.



25

22 Home Entertainment

22 Cool Toon Relief. Escape the dog days of summer with refreshing animated DVDs and Blu-ray discs. [by Mercedes Milligan]

23 The Samurai Critic: Reviews of the latest anime DVD releases. [by Charles Solomon]

25 Television

25 Radio's Car Talk Gets A Toon-Up. Click and Clack get an animated life. [by Michael Mallory]

26 The Dawn of a New Era? Cartoon Network's new initiative promises to act as a think tank designed to foster bold, new animated projects by artists. [by Ramin Zahed]

28 Greenlight Express. Five top TV development gurus offer tips on the fine art of pitching your ideas for a new animated show. [by Chris Grove]



48

30 Pitch Party 2008. Find out which contestants got the top votes from our panel of judges.

42 Shorts

42 Peque's Patchwork Life. Director Peque Varela stitches a visual memory quilt in her award-winning short, 1977. [by Mercedes Milligan]

43 New Media

43 Road Rash. Bix Pix and Sony's C-Spot put comedy in high gear with the *Roadents*. [by Ryan Ball]

44 Special Focus

44 Superheroic Heights. Will the love affair between Marvel and DC characters and animation reach new heights next year? [by Thomas J. McLean]



52



54

46 The Con Is On! Your checklist for some of the exciting events and personalities at this year's San Diego Comic-Con.

48 Licensing

48 Objects of Desire. Brief news bytes from the world of toon-related toys. [by Ramin Zahed]

64 VFX

50 Tech Reviews. Autodesk 3ds Max 2009; Alienware Area-51 m15x. [by Todd Sheridan Perry]

51 Digital Magic. Kung Fu Panda's 2D credits; moving Wachovia spots; Ballistic books. [by Chris Grove]

52 Leading a Digital Army. Guillermo del Toro works closely with the animation leads to create *Hellboy II*'s fantastical world, packed with large set pieces featuring hundreds of digital creations. [by Ron Magid]

54 Holy Redux, Batman! *The Dark Knight* delivers a variety of photo-real visual effects that inspire thrilling flights of imagination. [by Barbara Robertson]

56 Opportunities

56 Oscar's Student Club. Up close and personal with this year's Student Academy Award winners. [by Ellen Wolff]

60 3D Pete. Our artist takes on the madness that is Comic-Con. [by Mike Fisher]

62 A Day In the Life. Spend some time with *Spectacular Spider-Man* character designer, Sean Galloway.

Cover: Lucas Animation hits another home run with the new Warner Bros. feature and Cartoon Network series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

Comic-Con Cover: Warner Bros. Animation's *Batman: Gotham Knight*



We may be eight months away from the next Academy Awards ceremony, but it's not surprising that the publicity machines in Hollywood have already launched their Oscar campaigns. In fact, on the same day that Andrew Stanton's *WALL•E* opened nationwide, stories in the trades and various blogs announced that the picture may be one of the frontrunners in the Best Picture category.

Well, it may be a bit early, but we couldn't agree more! There was a similar head rush over Brad Bird's *Ratatouille* last summer, but there seems to be a general consensus that *WALL•E* and *EVE* make one of the best romantic couples we've seen on the big screen in a long time. Think Bogie and Bacall, Redford and Streisand, Lady and the Tramp-type icon material here.

In fact, I have to agree with moviegoers who believe that this environmentally conscious Pixar outing has been one of the best theatrical experiences of the year so far. It would be sweet to see Stanton, co-writer Jim Reardon, production designer Ralph Eggleston, sound and character voice designer Ben Burtt, composer Thomas Newman and cinematography consultants Roger Deakins and Dennis Murren all get honored on Oscar night. (How about creating a new category called Best Use of a *Hello, Dolly* Clip in a Movie, Ever!)

As our current issue has a huge distribution at the annual Comic-Con event in San Diego, you'll also find a lot of comic-centric articles in the magazine this month. Tom McLean had the opportunity to chat with *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* director Dave Filoni, and he's done a really fantastic job of having him talk about the challenges and rewards of bringing the George Lucas classic to animated life this summer.

We had several letters recently from readers who were wondering what's been happening at Cartoon Network recently. So we caught up with some of the top programming execs at the cabler as well as creators Craig McCracken and Rob Renzetti who are heading up an exciting new toon development initiative dubbed The Cartoonstitute. It's exciting to think that the creative climate may be friendly for artist-driven projects and shows that aren't created to please focus groups and corporate clones. We can dream, right?

Ramin Zahed
Editor-in-Chief
rzahed@animationmagazine.net



Oscar image, courtesy of A.M.P.A.S.

Quote of the Month

"I am not naive about what's at stake, but I almost feel like it's an obligation to not further the status quo if you become somebody with influence and exposure. I don't want to paint the same painting again. I don't want to make the same sculpture again. Why shouldn't a big movie studio be able to make those small, independent kinds of pictures?"

—*WALL•E* director Andrew Stanton, in a *New York Times* interview



ANIMATION MAGAZINE

August 2008

Vol. 22, Issue 7, No. 186

Info@animationmagazine.net

President Jean Thoren
Publisher Jodi Bluth
Accounting Jan Bayouth
Webmaster Eric Brandenburg

EDITORIAL Edit@animationmagazine.net

Editor-in-Chief Ramin Zahed

Web and Gaming Editor Ryan Ball

Contributing Editors Chris Grove, Ron Magid,
Barbara Robertson

Editorial Assistant Mercedes Milligan

Animation Art Advisor Ron Barbagallo

Digital Reviews Editor Todd Sheridan Perry

Contributors

Mi8ke Fisher, Michael Mallory,
Thomas J. McLean,
Charles Solomon, Ellen Wolff

ADVERTISING SALES

Sales@animationmagazine.net

Sheri Shelton

PRODUCTION Prod@animationmagazine.net

Art and Production Director Susanne Rector

CIRCULATION Circ@animationmagazine.net

Circulation Director Jan Bayouth

Circulation Administrator Alexis Beebe

TO ADVERTISE:

Phone: 818-991-2884

Fax: 818-991-3773

Email: Sales@animationmagazine.net

Website: www.animationmagazine.net

List Rental

Quantum List Marketing
480-860-6036

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

(USPS 015-877/ISSN 1041-617X)

Published monthly by:

Animation Magazine

30941 West Agoura Road, Suite 102

Westlake Village, CA 91361

Periodicals postage paid at Thousand Oaks Post Office, CA,
and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:

SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

30941 West Agoura Road, Suite 102

Westlake Village, CA 91361

TO SUBSCRIBE:

For the U.S., the rate is \$55 for 12 issues or \$90 for 24 issues. Rates for Canada and Mexico are US\$70 for 12 issues or US\$115 for 24 issues delivered by foreign airmail. Foreign rates are US\$85 for 12 issues or US\$140 for 24 issues delivered by foreign airmail. Please allow six to eight weeks for initial delivery. Also available in a digital version for \$36 for 12 issues or \$60 for 24 issues.

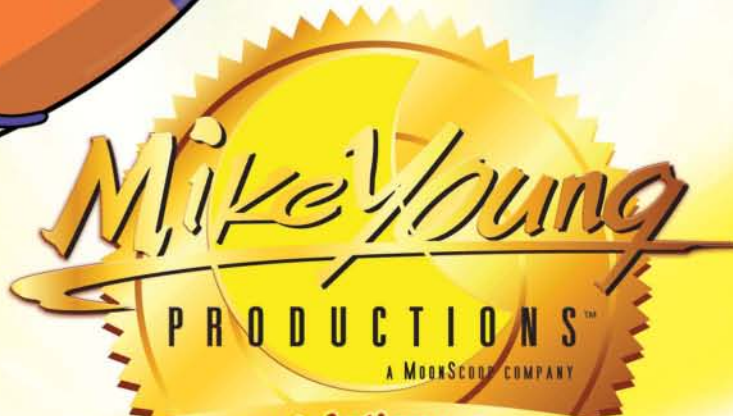
Animation Magazine

© 2008 Animation Magazine

Prior written approval must be obtained to duplicate any and all contents.

The copyrights and trademarks of images featured herein are the property of their respective owners. Animation Magazine acknowledges the creators and copyright holders of the materials mentioned herein, and does not seek to infringe on those rights.

Printed in the U.S.A.



Congratulations to all
our 2008 Emmy® Winners



I got a
ROCKET!

Winner in the
new Emmy category
New Approaches



Jakers!
The Adventures
of Piggle Winks



Winner for Outstanding Directing in an Animated
Program (JEFF GORDON)

Nominated for Outstanding Writing in Animation
(SINDY MCKAY, DENNIS HALEY, MARCY BROWN,
DENNIS MCCOY & PAMELA HICKEY)

growing
up
CREEPIE



Winner for Individual
Achievement in Animation
(PETER FERK, Storyboard Artist)

For more information on these shows and all of our other great brands visit:

www.TaffyEntertainment.com



© 2006 Entara Limited. All rights reserved. Willy the Sheep, Piggle Winks, Jakers! and associated trademarks are trademarks of Entara Ltd. • © 2008 Taffy Productions, LLC. Telegael Teo. Growing Up Creepie is a trademark and service mark of Taffy Productions, LLC. All Rights Reserved • © 2008 Taffy Productions, LLC. SLR Productions Pty Ltd, K.I.K.A. ARD, Sunwoo Entertainment, Inc., New South Wales Film and Television Office. All Rights Reserved.



The Animation Planner

August

July 27-Aug. 23

We're sure you'll find some fun animated projects at the **San Diego International Children's Film Festival**, which kicks off with Children's Day at Comic-Con (www.sdchildrensfilm.org).



1 Brendan Fraser tries to recapture the ancient magic in *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*, co-starring Jet Li and Maria Bello.

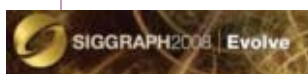
5 Enterprise fan alert: The new *Star Trek: The Complete Second Season Remastered* DVD is out in stores today. Also up for grabs: *Garfield Funfest*, *Back at the Barnyard*, *When No One's Looking* and *Ben 10: The Complete Season 4*.



7-11 Get a sneak peek at some of the best animated shorts and features from all over the world at **Hiroshima's 12th International Animation Festival** (<http://hiroanim.org>).

11-15

Geeks of the world, unite! It's time for the annual CG toon confab known as **SIGGRAPH**, which takes place at L.A.'s Convention Hall downtown (www.siggraph.org).

**12**

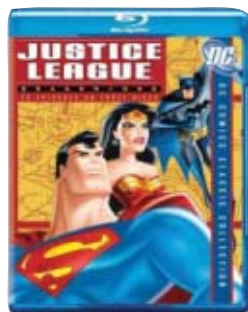
Competing for our vanishing consumer dollars today are various popular DVD releases including: *South Park: The Complete Eleventh Season* and *Tom and Jerry: Tales Vol. 5*.

**15**

The Force will be all over the place today as the new animated *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* movie hits theaters.

**15-17**

If you are a die-hard anime fan, you may feel a strange urge to fly to Orlando, Florida, for the city's big **Anime Festival** (www.animefestivalorlando.com).

**19**

Summer is almost halfway over! Fight sad thoughts by checking out the new *Justice League of America: Season One* on Blu-ray which you can order from Amazon for about \$42.

22

Belgian director Ben Stassen's innovative 3-D IMAX movie *Fly Me to the Moon* gives us a fly-on-the-wall perspective on Apollo 13's lunar landing.

**25-27**

Nvidia hosts the inaugural **NVISION** visual computing mega-event in San Jose, Calif. (www.nvision2008.com).

26

We know a lot of people who are going to pick up the first two seasons of *Heroes* on Blu-ray today, but we also know a lot of little girls who'll be begging their parents for *The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Beginning* DVD.

**26-28**

Mexico City is the place to be this week if you're in the L & M business and want to attend the **Expo Licensing Latin America** (<http://licensingmexico.com>).

**29**

Vin Diesel helps save Michelle Yeoh from a synthetic virus and a crazy cult in this mid-summer sci-fi thriller *Babylon A.D.*



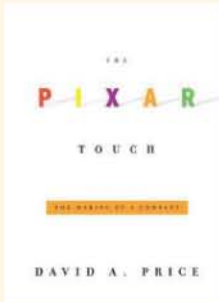


Books We Love: Summer Reading Edition

The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company

By David A. Price (Knopf, \$27.95)

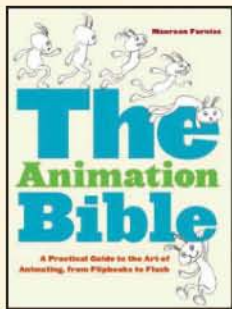
Another month, another book about Pixar! It seems that the world can't get enough stories about Emeryville's golden haven of CG animation and creativity. As the studio's ninth feature *WALL•E* continues to capture the attention of audiences all over the world this summer, ace business reporter David A. Price offers readers a delicious look at the company, from its early days as a graphics software shop to its position as one of the most successful entertainment machines of our time. The author has spent a lot of time interviewing the sometimes press-shy members of the team (including founding guru Ed Catmull and co-founder and current Disney CCO John Lasseter) to paint a clear picture of how the studio came to be the standard-setter in the animation field. He doesn't skimp on juicy behind-the-scenes battles either, so you get the goods about the John Lasseter-Jeffrey Katzenberg feud and the tough battles with Michael Eisner. Fans of superior animation will also get bundles of tales about the shop's creative m.o. and the team's inspirations. Take this informative page-turner with you on the next plane trip, and you may not care how shoddy airline service has become these days.



The Animation Bible

By Maureen Furniss (Abrams, \$29.95)

I find myself recommending this awesome primer by animation historian and teacher Maureen Furniss to anyone who asks me anything about animation these days. And there are plenty of reasons to cherish this beautifully designed bible. Not only has Furniss put together an amazing wealth of information about the art and craft of animation, she has organized her material extremely well and packed the book with a ridiculous amount of illustrations, case studies, tips and quotes from some of our favorite artists—from Bill Plympton and Michael Sporn to Virgil Widrich and Michael Dudok de Wit. She has also managed to give some effective advice on how to become more productive, how to choose the right methods or media and how to expand your horizons as an animator. There are even sections devoted to sound design, pixilation and pitching the project. Although the book leans more toward artistic and indie auteur-driven work (rather than big studio CG features or TV and new media shows), you'll find yourself referring to it over and over in the future.



The Art of Kung Fu Panda

By Tracey Miller-Zarneke (Insight Editions, \$45)

Regardless of how some critics have felt about *Kung Fu Panda*'s storyline and stock characters, there's one thing everybody seems to agree about: the movie's stunning character design, art direction and fluid visual panache. That's why adding the lovely *Art of* book penned by Miller-Zarneke to your collection makes absolute sense. Although the volume isn't as elaborate (and doesn't come with gizmos and CDs) as other recent books by Insight Editions, the 300-plus pieces of visual development artwork—including stellar art by the film's character designer Nicolas Marlet (*The Prince of Egypt*, *Sinbad*, *Madagascar*, *Over the Hedge*)—and behind-the-scenes interviews with the gifted artists and craftspeople are reason enough to cherish this collector's dream. Plus, if you order the book along with the new *Art of WALL•E* edition (which we reviewed here last month) on Amazon, you end up paying only \$60 for both books. Just don't take them to the beach, because you won't want anything to ruin the glossy pages and reproductions.



Force: Character Design from Life Drawing

By Michael D. Mattesi (Focal Press, \$29.95)

Professional production artist and instructor Michael Mattesi has a way of drawing characters which have a certain kind of appeal and timeless charm. So we're lucky that he has decided to share his wisdom and insights with readers in a fascinating new Focal Press book. "The thing about character design is that the character, whether good or evil, MUST have appeal and tell a story," he writes in the book's intro. Flipping through the entertaining pages of the book, you'll see how Mattesi and some of the other well-respected designers such as Stephen Silver, Rik Maki, Dean Yeagle, Marc Perry, Teddy Newton and Jake Kazdal take real life inspirations and deliver some eye-popping drawings. Simple step-by-step explanations, exercises based on real photos and models, and original theories should help inspire anyone who's ever had the impulse to create something of value just using a pencil and a pad. ■



—Ramin Zahed

Big Kudos for Small-Screen Toons

Emmy loves animation—at least the Creative Arts Daytime Emmys did this last month as many of our favorite animated shows received the coveted prize. PBS, Nick Jr., Disney Channel, Kids' WB!, Nickelodeon, Kabillion and Discovery Kids saw several of their toons honored by the TV academy. The straight-forward animation category was a three-way tie between Nick's *El Tigre* and *Wow! Wow! Wubbzy!* and Discovery Kids/*Mike Young* toon *Growing Up Creepie* (which has won in previous years). Here is a list of the animation-related winners:



Children's Animated Program: *Curious George* (PBS)
Special Class Animated Program: *The Backyardigans* (Nick Jr.)
Directing in an Animated Program: *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks* (PBS)
Main Title Design: *WordWorld* (PBS)
Music Direction and Composing: *Wonder Pets!* (Nick Jr.)
Original Song, Children's and Animation: "FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman Theme Song", by Terry Tompkins, Roc Gagliese, Steve D'Angelo and Glen Berger for

FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman (PBS)
Performer in an Animated Program: Eartha Kitt in *Disney's The Emperor's New School* (Disney Channel)
Pre-School Children's Series: *Sesame Street* (PBS)
Sound Editing, Live Action and Animation: *The Batman* (Kids' WB!)
Sound Mixing: *The Batman* (Kids' WB!)
Writing in a Children's Series: *Between the Lions* (PBS)
Writing in Animation: *Peep and the Big*

Wide World (PBS) and *WordGirl* (PBS)

New Approaches, Daytime Children's: *I Got a Rocket* (Kabillion)

Animation: *El Tigre* (Nickelodeon); *Wow! Wow! Wubbzy!* (Nickelodeon); and *Growing Up Creepie* (Discovery Kids)



Smurfs March to Sony

Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation have secured the rights to *The Smurfs* and plan to make a feature film version of the popular blue villagers that mixes live action and animation. Last month, *Variety* reported that the film will be produced by Jordan Kerner, who helped the studio secure the rights from Lafig Belgium, with *Shrek 2* and *Shrek the Third* writers J. David Stern and David N. Weiss on board to write the script.

The Smurfs were created in 1958 as comic-book characters by Belgian cartoonist Pierre "Peyo" Culliford, but are best known in America as the stars of the hit Hanna-Barbera animated series that ran on NBC from 1981 to 1990. Kerner was reportedly producing a complete CG-animated feature about the blue guys at Paramount/Nickelodeon, but the movie has now found a new home. The previous incarnation of the feature was rumored to have John Lithgow and Julia Sweeney attached as voice talent. Frankly, we don't care who does the voices as long as we get to see the little guys in their full glory up on the big screen, pronto! ■

Hot Discs

The following new animated releases were bubbling at the top of Amazon's bestseller list recently:

1. *Futurama: The Beast with a Billion Backs* (Fox)
2. *The Sword in the Stone: 40th Anniversary Ed.* (Disney)
3. *The Boondocks: Complete Second Season* (Sony)
4. *Batman: Gotham Knight* (Warner Bros.)
5. *Popeye the Sailor Vol. 2* (Warner Bros.)
6. *Persepolis* (Sony)
7. *Pokemon Movie: The Rise of Darkrai* (VIZ)
8. *Naruto Uncut Box Set Vol. 8* (VIZ)
9. *Avatar The Last Airbender: Book 3 Fire, Vol. 4* (Paramount/Nick)
10. *South Park: The Complete 11th Season* (Comedy Central)



Source: amazon.com; 6/25/08

Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP



LONDON AFFILIATE: KATTEN MUCHIN ROSENMAN CORNISH LLP

Heavy Metal

Gamers get their iron supplement in the form of SEGA's fresh new *Iron Man* release.

by Ryan Ball

In the Marvel Comics universe, Iron Man has historically taken a back seat to such pop culture staples as Spider-Man, The Hulk, Captain America and even the X-Men. But all that is changing now that the man with the metal exoskeleton has his own major motion picture and a top-flight video game to go along with it. SEGA de-

shooter that pits Stark and his superhero alter ego against unspeakable odds. Before tackling immense open battlefields on the ground and in the air, players will be able to customize their armor suit as they prepare to take on armies of fighter jets, tanks, armor-plated super villains and other vicious enemies. While the story is derived from the mov-



buted *Iron Man* in conjunction with the May 2 release of the highly anticipated, live-action feature film from Marvel Studios and Paramount Pictures.

While most game studios would be lucky to snag one Oscar nominee for a voice cast, SEGA has managed to get two. Robert Downey Jr. (*Chaplin*) can be heard reprising the role of Tony Stark, a billionaire military-industrialist playboy who changes his ways and becomes an iron clad crusader for justice after being kidnapped by terrorists and nearly losing his life. Meanwhile, Terence Howard (*Hustle and Flow*) is also back as Lt. Col. James "Rhodey" Rhodes, Stark's best friend and a decorated military pilot. Shaun Toub, who plays the character Yinsen in the film, also lends his voice and likeness to the interactive version of the story.

Iron Man is a third-person action

ie's script, it also incorporates elements from the original *Iron Man* comic books.

SEGA's Andy Alamano, who served as associate producer on the game, tells us director Jon Favreau and other members of the film's creative team had ample access to the game and often offered input. "We were always excited to get their feedback and get it into the game," Alamano notes. "When working on a project like this, you can't beat going to the source. Robert Downey Jr. is so excited about the role that he actually took a lot of his time to go over our game script and help iterate on specific details to make sure our Tony was the same as the film's."

San Francisco-based developer Secret Level, which was acquired by SEGA

just prior to the start of production, also got a hold of assets from the film, which helped the team create the game's cinematic animation. "We paid close attention to what clips of film we got access to and really did our best to emulate them as closely as we could," says Alamano. "Having access to all the ILM models really helped, too."

According to Alamano, one of the biggest challenges of the development process was creating a world that was big enough for Iron Man. "Because

he moves so fast, we had to have a world where he could navigate quickly but not feel cramped. The end

results are some massive landscapes that allow for total freedom of flight. You really get to feel like you can fly around the world."

Gamers are sure to get a huge kick out of the flight aspect of the game, especially when all the cool, devastating weapons come into play. Players will also be able to direct power to different parts of the Iron Man suit in order to pull off a variety of unique attacks that will have comic-book fans beating their chests and declaring, "I am Iron Man!" ■



Iron Man is available for Xbox 360, Wii, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 2, Nintendo DS, PSP and Windows-based PC. For more information on the title, go to www.sega.com. Watch the trailer and a behind-the-scenes video on AniMagTV (www.animag.tv).

STAR ROBOT CHICKEN WARS



DVD IN STORES 7/22

[adult swim]

Still *Lost in Blue*

Konami and Hudson Soft double the fun in the latest survival adventure game for DS.

by Ryan Ball

For the third installment in the hit *Lost in Blue* franchise, publisher Konami Digital Entertainment Inc. and developer Hudson Soft set out to enhance the interactive anime experience by taking the franchise into new territory. This time there are four playable characters rather than two, which changes the dynamics of the gameplay and allows for multiple storylines to be interwoven throughout the game. The title even takes a page from the ABC television series *Lost* in incorporating flashbacks as the characters struggle to survive on a mysterious island using their unique abilities.

The previous *Lost in Blue* games have revolved around a "boy meets girl" scenario, with a budding relationship playing heavily into the action. With the addition of two more characters, the emphasis shifts from romance to teamwork, friendship and loyalty. Players are also encouraged to explore their surroundings rather than focusing solely on getting off the island. Working alone or cooperatively with other characters, gamers can gather food, hunt dangerous wildlife and ultimately engineer an escape while coping with lightning strikes, earthquakes and other forces of nature provided by realistic weather systems.

Producer Hitoshi Kimoto tells us that the fans played a big role in the creation of the game. He and his team received a lot of feedback on the last two titles from gamers in both Japan and North America, and used that to deliver a sequel that lives up to expectations.



"We had a contest after *Lost in Blue 2* asking fans to write in and come up with the most interesting and fun scenarios for the next *Lost in Blue* game," Kimoto recalls. "We got a lot of responses, and we took the best ideas and put them in *Lost in Blue 3*. You can see the finalists' names in the credits of the game."

One idea that came from contest winners was weaving in backstory through flashbacks

and creating mystery through memory loss. Most likely inspired by TV, the element presented the development team with one of their greater challenges. Keeping track of these various storylines and intertwining them in a way that made sense and fit the gameplay was no easy task, according to Kimoto, who notes that their hard work actually makes things a bit easier for players.

"Previously, people have said that the *Lost in Blue* games were too hard," he says. "Our feeling was that it's a survival game, it can't be too easy! But we have made it a bit easier by allowing the player to have the four characters work together as a team. Your friends will help you survive, which will give you more time to explore the island."

While the Nintendo DS offers portability, touch-screen functionality, multi-

ple viewing areas and other advantages over competing handhelds and consoles, it presents challenges to developers who want to engage players with animation. Kimoto says that being selective with the animation was the key to getting around the limitations of the platform. He remarks, "Instead of animating whole characters, we focused on animating key features of the face, like the eyes and mouth. By doing so, we were still able to make the characters expressive and relatable."

The game offers more than 20 mini-games involving such activities as river rafting, engineering and communicating with dolphins. Gamers can even download and share special mini-games or challenge friends to heated battles using the wireless capabilities of the DS.

Kimoto thinks players will most appreciate the open-ended and non-linear nature of the game as they explore the island and make use of the resources available. "It inspires curiosity about one's world," he remarks. "Ultimately, this is the message in



Hitoshi Kimoto

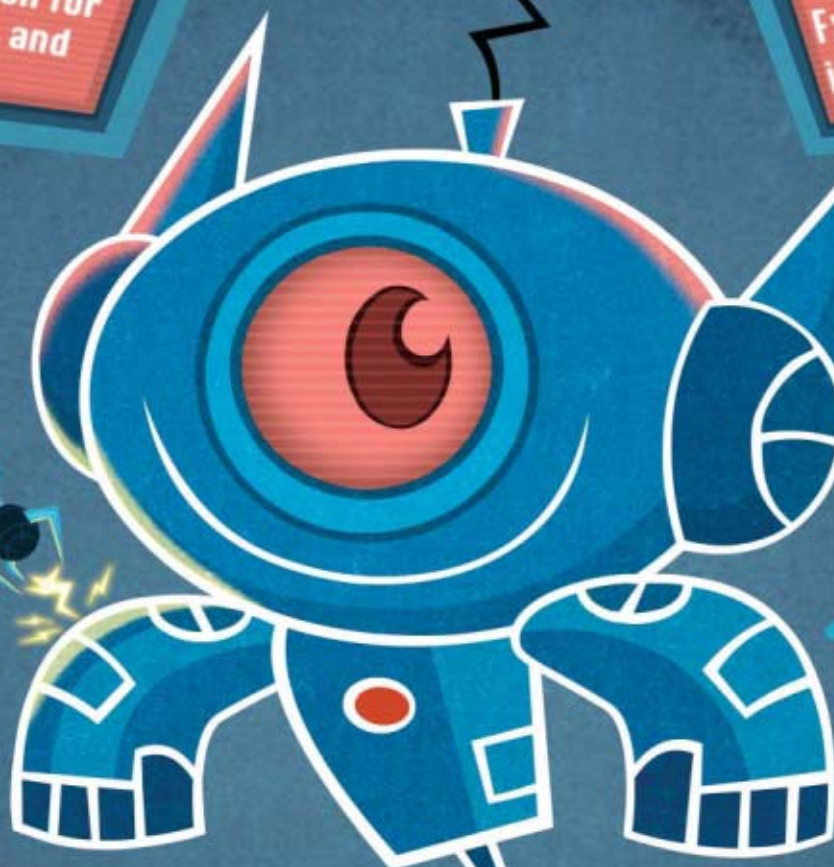


***Lost in Blue 3* is now available exclusively for Nintendo DS and is recommended for players ages 10 and up due to mild violence. More information on this and other Konami titles can be found at www.konami.com.**

OddBotTM, Inc.

Oddbot Inc. is home to a creative production team focused on delivering high quality animation for broadcast, film, and the web. ■

Contact us!
P: 323-258-8593
F: 323-258-8594
info@oddbot.net



Visit our website! www.oddbot.net



Animated Again, the Force Is

Dave Filoni and his team convince George Lucas to debut the CG-animated *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* series in theaters first. by Thomas J. McLean

After *Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith* completed the tale of Anakin Skywalker's tragic transformation into Darth Vader, not even George Lucas expected to see the ground-breaking space fantasy return to the big screen.

But good animation can prompt even the famously stubborn Lucas to change his mind, as director Dave Filoni (whose toon credits include Nick's *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Disney's *Dave the Barbarian* and *Teamo Supremo* and Warner's *Mission Hill*) discovered while screening footage from the upcoming animated TV series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* for his boss on a big screen. "That's when, really early on, the idea struck George, and he said the fans should really get the chance to see this on the big screen," says Filoni, who quickly found himself directing the first *Star Wars* animated feature film on top of 22 half-hour episodes of a TV show.

A Big Jedi Leap

"It was a big leap of faith on behalf of the company to take this franchise and move it into the world of [long-form] animation," says Catherine Winder, producer of the feature and executive producer of the series. "It's exciting, but hugely daunting because we want to do what's best for the property."

Set between *Episode II* and *Episode III*, *The Clone Wars* feature is a stand-alone tale that focuses on the relationship between Anakin Skywalker and Obi-

Wan Kenobi, as the battle between the Republic's Jedi defenders and Count Dooku's separatist forces escalates to the next level. The film will feature familiar characters such as Jabba the Hutt, lesser-known ones like Kit Fisto and Asajj Ventress, and the debut of Anakin's young female apprentice, Ahsoka Tano.

While fans are most likely going to fixate on Ahsoka, the film also fills the story of Anakin, who gets to play the hero in *Clone Wars* before his inevitable





Dave Filoni and wise friend.

fall to the dark side. “We really got to show him as a hero and as the good person he was, which I think, as George has always said, makes the downward spiral all that much more important and effective,” Filoni says.

The feature, to be released by Warner Bros. on Aug. 15, was adapted from a handful of planned episodes and is designed both to stand on its own and to lead into the 22-episode first season of the series, set to debut on Cartoon Network in the fall, and a second season of 26 episodes, now in production. “That was probably the biggest challenge, was ensuring when we were producing this movie that it really felt like its own story, a full feature-film narrative,” says Winder.

Influences and Inspirations

On the visual side, Filoni says his initial brief from Lucas was to make “something no one has ever seen before.” Finding that look began with sketches, and Filoni says he was influenced by his previous

project, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, as well as the look devised for the previous *Clone Wars* animated series by Genndy Tartakovsky.

Filoni also quickly learned that adding an extra dimension poses many questions for animators. “In 2D

Translating the human characters into 3D animation was the most difficult task. “It was less about photorealism as much as let’s try to make a style, let’s try to come up with a visual look to the characters, who even though they’re not realistic, we’ll come to believe in

“It’s cool to have [George Lucas], who came up with Chewbacca, tell you how he makes *Star Wars*. The key ingredient is how he edits it, how his mind looks at it from shot to shot.”

—*Star Wars: The Clone Wars* director Dave Filoni

animation, we never have a problem with cloth and human characters. You can stylize the human characters in any way and it’s not much of a question, you just accept the look of it,” he says. “In 3D there are a whole bunch of challenges that I think everyone in that particular field is chasing all the time on how are we going to make something look and feel real.”

them as characters in this stylized world,” Filoni says.

Even before the feature film was added to the schedule, *Clone Wars* was an ambitious project. Winder says she came to Lucas with the job of setting up the project with a never-before tried pipeline that had to produce animation of the highest quality at an affordable cost.



"It was trying to figure out how to put a team together and create something that no one has ever seen before, because if not, there's no point in doing it," she says.

Winder, who has been a producer and executive with extensive experience in overseas operations, set up the feature and series with the front-end work including writing, storyboarding art direction and design done at Lucasfilm Animation's Marin County studio.

or the other of the overseas studios will take a complete episode through to final render.

Winder's pipeline was immediately tested by the decision to make a feature film. "I had to rework the entire plan and just figure out how do we fit this movie into the flow without hurting either project, because it was critical that both maintain the



Filoni says he was influenced by his previous project, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, as well as the look devised for Cartoon Network's previous *Clone Wars* animated series (2003-2005) by Genndy Tartakovsky.

Perfect Art of Pre-Viz

"We take the stories through pre-viz, which isn't typical to television, and I think that is what's setting our shows apart cinematography-wise and storywise," she says. "We really spend a lot of time hashing out the story in the 3D world with editorial."

Once picture is locked, the Marin studio does a portion of the asset builds, texturing and rigging in-house, with the rest of the animation done at Lucasfilm Animation Singapore and at a partner studio in Taiwan. Winder says either one

quality and creativity that we had started with," she says.

For Filoni, *Clone Wars'* most important contribution to Star Wars lore is Ahsoka. "Nobody knows what happens to her, so that's been a particularly exciting character to work with," he says.

Familiar characters such as the droids C-3PO and R2-D2 have somewhat different requirements, as they have to move and act like their live-action counterparts, Filoni says. That led the *Clone Wars* animators to tap into the resources at ILM and research the ways in which such characters were animated

in the prequels.

Filoni and Winder relied heavily on guidance from Lucas himself. "It's cool to have the guy who came up with Chewbacca tell you how he makes *Star Wars*," Filoni says. "The key ingredient is how he edits it, how his mind looks at it from shot to shot."

All that remains to be seen is how fans react and whether audiences will follow *Clone Wars* from the theater to the weekly series. "We're taking something that's great here in the movie theater but at the same time you're going to remember that, 'Wow, this fall I'll be able to see this every week as a TV series,' and I think that's a really exciting bridge." ■

Tom McLean is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in animation, comic books and visual effects. You can read his popular comic-book blog at http://weblogs.variety.com/bags_and_boards.

***Star Wars: The Clone Wars* opens in theaters nationwide on August 15.**



Stan Winston

*Artist
Dreamer
Consummate professional*

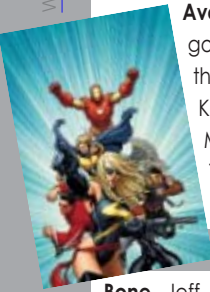
You are already missed.

*Your friends at
Industrial Light & Magic*

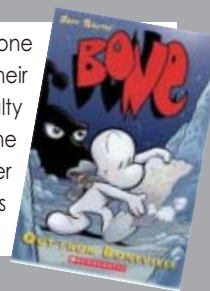


20 Comic Book Movies to Keep an Eye on

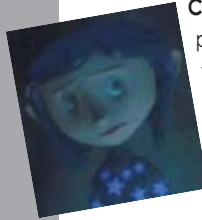
It's been a banner year for movies based on comic books in Hollywood. The studio suits finally came to realize that well-known comic characters and graphic novels are the closest thing you can have to sure things in town. That's why we rounded up the latest info about 20 of these coming attractions for your records. We know there are a lot of more similarly themed projects in development, but this should tide you over until our spies provide us with more detailed material!




Avengers. Those who were smart enough to sit through the credits of *Iron Man* got a good eyeful of Samuel Jackson as Nick Fury. According to director Jon Favreau, the third *Iron Man* movie would be the ideal place to introduce the Avengers storyline. Known as "Earth's Mightiest Heroes," the Avengers was originally made up of Ant-Man, Wasp, Thor, Iron Man and The Hulk. However, Captain America replaced The Hulk after the first four issues of the comic book. Zak Penn (*X2*, *X-Men: The Last Stand*, *The Incredible Hulk*) is writing the script. **Expected to arrive July 2011.**




Bone. Jeff Smith's self-published fantasy follows the adventures of the Bone cousins (plucky Fone, scheming Phony and easygoing Smiley) who leave their home of Boneville and face a long list of adventures involving dragons, royalty and dark forces of evil. Former Warner Bros. exec Dan Lin is producing the adaptation of Smith's epic which is 1,300 pages long. No word yet whether the movie will be live-action CG-mix or straight—and yes, Smith did work as an animator on *Bebe's Kids* in 1992. **2010-2011.**



Coraline. Directed by the amazing Henry Selick, this much-anticipated feature produced at Portland-based LAIKA is based on Neil Gaiman's book about a young girl who discovers a parallel world by walking through a mysterious door in her house. Dakota Fanning, Teri Hatcher, Ian McShane, Jennifer Saunders and Dawn French make up the interesting voice cast. The cool band They Might Be Giants and Oscar-nominated composer Bruno Coulais deliver the music. **Dec. 2008, limited; Feb. 6, 2009, wide.**

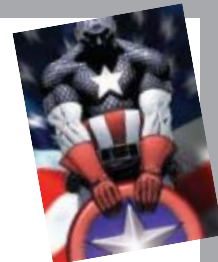


Cowboys & Aliens. Comic-book shopkeep turned comic-book publisher Scott Mitchell Rosenberg will have a hand in producing the feature adaptation of his gun/laser-slinging graphic novel, along with Ron Howard and others from Imagine and Platinum Studios. A sci-fi western to a T, the story takes place in 1800s Arizona when warring cowboys and Apaches are forced to get along in order to stop an alien invasion. The script is being penned by *Iron Man* collaborators Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby. Robert Downey Jr. is in talks to star! **Headin' theater-goers off at the pass in 2010.**



Dragonball. Producer Stephen Chow (*Kung Fu Hustle*) and director James Wong (*Final Destination*) will be picking and choosing elements from Akira Toriyama's sensational manga/anime series; Justin Chatwin's Goku and Emmy Rossum's Bulma will be free of their characters' fantastic hair-dos, but James Marsters' Piccolo will maintain his sinister green skin. Cartoonish animal characters will be left out, but chi-energy blasts created by Amalgamated Dynamics and Ollin are in. Tentative plans for two sequels are on the table! **April 10, 2009.**

The First Avenger: Captain America. Our web-savvy readers have probably caught a wiff of the fan frenzy over a glimpse of the Captain's shield in recently released *Incredible Hulk* trailers—we can only imagine how the excitement will pick up as we approach this release! Meant as a prelude to 2011's *The Avengers*, the Nick Cassavetes-directed film will divulge the origins of the most patriotic superhero, with Marvel's Kevin Feige recently confirming a WWII period setting. **May 6, 2011.**




The Flash. Electrocution never seemed so cool! Director David Dobkin has announced that this feature will focus on the Wally West incarnation of the super speedster, who acquires his powers after being doused in chemicals and struck by lightning in his uncle's lab—can you say "liability suit?" The film is intended as a spin-off of the upcoming *Justice League*. We also hear whispers that *Darjeeling Limited* star Adam Brody will take the lead role ... He's certainly aerodynamic. **Not fast enough! Slated for 2010.**



The Ghouly Boys. Created, written and illustrated by Christopher (he of the one-name moniker!), this Slave Labor Graphics Publishing comic centers on a quartet of sweet, young monsters—a wolf boy, a kid zombie, a young sea monster and a third-generation boogie man—who band together after being rejected by "normal" society. Mandate Pictures has optioned the film rights and Benderspink is producing the project. **2010.**



G.I. Joe. This one is positioned as the perfect summer 2009 escapist fare—directed by Stephen Sommers (*The Mummy* movies), it follows the high-octane adventures of an elite military unit comprised of special operatives operating out of a place known as The Pit. The tough-as-nails cast includes Channing Tatum, Wayne Johnson, Dennis Quaid, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Marlon Wayans, Sienna Miller and (recently confirmed) Brendan Fraser. **Aug. 7, 2009.**

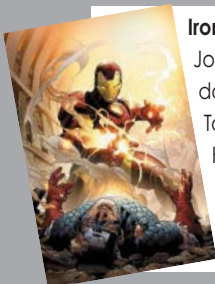
Hack/Slash. Expect an unusual mix of blood, gore and tongue-in-cheek humor in this adaptation of the graphic novel by Stefano Caselli, Tim Seeley and Federica Manfredi, to be directed by Todd Lincoln and adapted by Justin Marks. The movie centers on a brave survivor name Cassie Hack who travels to small towns across the country to corner killers and slashers, along with her deformed companion, Vlad. We hope they keep some of the plot from the book's third volume, in which Hack and Vlad visit a comic-book convention! **2010.**



Runaways. If this project pulls through, it'll be the first comic-turned-movie property to hit screens that was created after bell-bottom jeans. Series creator Brian K. Vaughan will pen the script about his cast of super-powered teenagers who are trying to make up for the crimes of their super-villain parents (they never grow up how you raise 'em, do they?). The comic debuted in 2004 and was written by Vaughan with art by Adrian Alphona, and won a Harvey Award in '06. Marvel Ent.'s Kevin Feige (*Iron Man*) is producing. **Undetermined; probably not til 2011.**



Iron Man 2. After the iron-clad box office success of *Iron Man*, director Jon Favreau is taking Robert Downy Jr.'s smart mouthed hero down darker paths. Favreau has mentioned that this installment will introduce Tony Starks infamous alcohol abuse, and James Rhodes' (Terrence Howard) transformation into War Machine has edged out whispers about Red Scare villain The Mandarin. One confirmed cameo will be Norse superhero Thor, whose dedicated film will premier later that year. **April 10, 2010.**



Justice League: Mortal. Green Arrow, Green Lantern, Captain America and Wonder Woman must deal with the expulsion of Batman and the death of Superman at the hands of the nefarious Doomsday in this long-anticipated live-action adaptation, directed by George Miller (*Mad Max*, *Babe*, *Happy Feet*). The writers' strike delayed the starting date of this DC Comics lover's dream. The rumored low-wattage cast includes Adam Brody, rapper Common, D.J. Cotrona, Armie Hammer, Megan Gale and Santiago Cabrera. New Zealand's wonder shop Weta will be outfitting the superpowers! **Lots of factors could delay this one, but we have our fingers crossed for 2010.**



Shazam. Director Peter Segal (*Get Smart*) told fans at WonderCon earlier this year that he's working on a new adaptation by John August, titled *Billy Batson and the Legend of Shazam*. In the comic book first introduced in 1973, mild-mannered



Billy Batson discovers that he can call on the powers of an ancient Egyptian wizard, Shazam, and undertakes heroic exploits. ("Shazam!" is an acronym for six gods and heroes of the ancient world: Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles and Mercury!) The property inspired the popular CBS series, which ran 1974-1977. **May find its powers in 2010.**

THE Animation Post-Production Specialists

Color Correction
Digital Intermediates
2d / 3d Animation
Offline / Online Editorial
Animatics / Pre-viz
Compositing / VFX
Motion Graphics
Credits / Titles



Your needs are diverse.
Your post house's abilities should be too.
That's why we make sure all your bases are covered.
From animatics and pre-viz to compositing and color correction,
we're with you every step of the way.

818.566.3083

www.310studios.com

Create. Support. Direct. Design. Inspire. Build.



The Spirit. Will Eisner's 1940s comic strip about a risen-from-the-dead hero (played by Gabriel Macht) fighting the forces of crime (mostly Samuel L. Jackson) finally hits screens this Christmas. After Eisner's death in 2005, Frank Miller (*Sin City*) was asked to helm the adaptation—then abandoned by fellow comic-book writer Jeph Loeb. Miller will utilize his trademark dark tones and digital effects to give the film a timeless and true-to-form look that draws heavily from the strip. **Dec. 25, 2008.**

Thor. Director Matthew Vaughn is no longer attached to the project, but the word on the street is that Marvel is pushing the project forward. The big movie adventure of the hammer-wielding Norse god is being written by Mark Protosevich (*I Am Legend* and *Poseidon*.) Wishful thinkers on the Internet are saying that Marvel is courting Brad Pitt for the lead. **Won't be ready before 2010.**

ThunderCats. The '80s are here again as the fabulous humanoid cats of planet Thundera are slowly purring their way to movie screens. Jerry Flaherty—a gaming world veteran with credits such as *Gears of War* and *Command and Conquer*—has been tapped to direct the CG-animated adaptation. Paul Sopocy's script follows our feline pals as they face the evil sorcerer Mumm-Ra on Third Earth. Paula Weinstein is attached as producer and Warner Bros. is releasing the film. [Cool trivia: The original series (1985-89) was animated by Pacific Animation Corp, the name of a collective of Japanese studios, including Topcraft, which would later become Studio Ghibli!] **Summer 2010.**

Tintin. Fans have been waiting a long time for Belgian comicker Hergé's plucky adventurer to make it to the big screen. Now Midas touch-endowed directors Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson will reward them with three! All are scripted by BAFTA winner Steven Moffat, with Spielberg helming the first. Shot in full 3-D mo-cap with performance capture veteran Andy Serkis as Captain Haddock and teen Thomas Sangster (*Nanny McPhee*, *Love Actually*) as our hero. (No word on casting for Snowy.) **Might see this as early as 2009!**

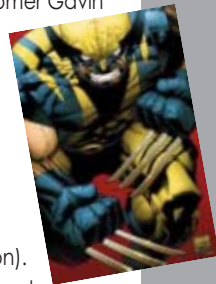
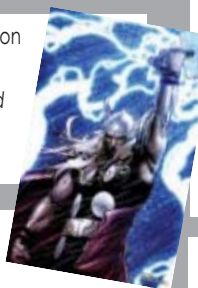
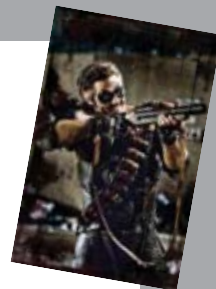
Watchmen. After spending over two decades bouncing around developmental purgatory, Alan Moore and David Gibbons' acclaimed graphic novel will finally make it to the big screen. In an alternate-reality 1985, superheroes exist, albeit under

sinister and threatening conditions as a vigilante hero's investigation into the murder of a fellow superhuman uncovers a derailed extermination conspiracy. 300 helmer Zack Snyder is directing this twisted tale (in full color!). **March 9, 2009.**

X-Men Origins: Wolverine. Up and comer Gavin Hood directs this prequel to the X-Men trilogy. The story—a pet project conceived and written by David Benioff—centers on rebellious X-Man Wolverine's (Hugh Jackman) origin in the mysterious Weapon X project and his encounters with the insidious William Stryker (Danny Huston). Other Weapon X mutants like Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) and Sabretooth (Liev Schreiber) will appear, as well as a love interest for our tough-as-nails hero. **May 1, 2009.**

—Compiled by Mercedes Milligan and Ramin Zahed

Sources: www.comicbookmovie.com, Internet Movie Database, *Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter*



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Image from "The Gloaming" by Andy Huang

SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

JOHN C. HENCH DIVISION OF ANIMATION & DIGITAL ARTS

BA IN ANIMATION & DIGITAL ARTS

MFA IN ANIMATION & DIGITAL ARTS

MINOR IN ANIMATION & DIGITAL ARTS

Our innovative program exploring the frontiers of animation art, is looking for students for admission for the Fall term 2009.

Internationally acclaimed faculty include Christine Panushka, Sheila Sofian, Dr. Richard Weinberg, Kathy Smith, Tom Sato, Eric Hanson, Everett Lewis, Michael Patterson, Candace Reckinger and Lisa Mann.

CONTACT INFORMATION

DAPHNE SIGISMONDI
ANIMATION, USC SCHOOL OF CNTV
LOS ANGELES, CA 90089-2211

Telephone: (213) 740 3986
Email: dsigismondi@cinema.usc.edu
Website: <http://anim.usc.edu>



CENTER FOR DIGITAL IMAGING ARTS AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

WALTHAM, MA | WASHINGTON, DC

CREATE your WORLD

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS:

**3D ANIMATION+INTERACTIVE MEDIA
GAME ART+CHARACTER ANIMATION**

Intensive full- and part-time programs for the skills and tools you need to turn your ideas into reality. Financial assistance and career services available. **Apply today!**



800-808-CDIA | INFO@CDIABU.COM | WWW.CDIABU.COM

**ONE WEEK. TEN SHOWS.
THOUSANDS OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS.**

create chaos 2008

**p PRINTING
+ PAPER +
PACKAGING**
DESIGN CONFERENCE


The **Creative Suite** Conference

con>erge08
MOTION GRAPHICS CONFERENCE


THE PIXEL CONFERENCE
THE PHOTOSHOP CONFERENCE FOR DESIGNERS

MGFest
motion graphics festival
www.mgfest.com


THE VECTOR CONFERENCE
THE HOW-TO ILLUSTRATOR AND FLASH CONFERENCE

stash
THEATRE


CREATIVEHEADS.NET®
JOBS FOR THE RIGHT BRAINS


</THE WEB DESIGN CONFERENCE>


CREATE AWARDS
GALLERY

**CONFERENCES: OCT. 13-17, 2008 • EXPO: OCT. 14-16, 2008
ORLANDO, FL**

www.createchaos.com

For exhibitor information e-mail info@createchaos.com

PROMOTIONAL
PARTNERS:

ADWEEK

Pulse Media Group

ANIMATION

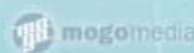
NFP
National Federation of
Photodup Professionals

boards

Producers

LAYERS

ldN

mogomedia

PAF
PACIFIC ASSOCIATION
of Florida

**GREAT
OUTPUT**

Cool Toon Relief

Escape the dog days of summer with refreshing animated DVDs (and Blu-rays) featuring Bender, Freakazoid and Babs and Buster Bunny (no relation).

by Mercedes Milligan

Futurama: The Beast with a Billion Backs [Fox, \$29.98]

Buckle your spacebelts, kids: The crew of the Planetary Express is back on DVD with the sequel to last year's *Bender's Big Score*. Picking up shortly after the last adventure, the plot follows Fry, Leela, Bender and the gang as Earth is coping with fear and uncertainty over a huge rift in space-time which has busted up the galaxy. Concurrent plots include Bender joining up with a league of humanicidal

robots, some classic senile scientist rivalry, a tentacled space beast from beyond the rift using a massive cult to control the people of Earth and, perhaps weirdest of all, Fry has a girlfriend. And she *likes* him. Original series creators Matt Groening and David X.

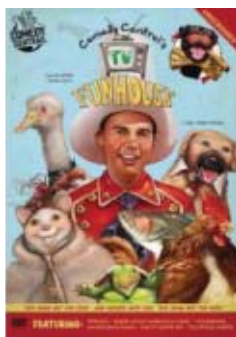
Cohen teamed up with writer Michael Rowe for this entertaining outing.

Directed by Peter Avanzino, *Beast* features the voice talents of Brittany Murphy, David Cross, Stephen Hawking and Dan Castellaneta as the Robot Devil. The disc also includes "lost episode" footage of the *Futurama* game, deleted scenes, commentary and a sneak peak of the next installment. (Note to self: Insert "shiny metal ass" joke here.)

[Release date: June 24]

Comedy Central's TV Funhouse [Comedy Central, \$26.98]

It may not have perfect animation or hi-tech effects, but no one can fault us for bringing attention to this



long-awaited release. Send the kids to bed, crack open a beer and let Doug Dale and the Anipals treat you to some totally non-PC puppeteering. You'll laugh, you'll cry—you

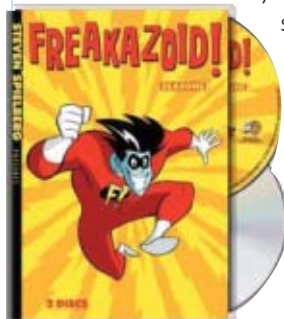
might even vomit—as you relive all the delicious late-night naughtiness this tongue-in-cheek retro kids' show send-up brought to television in the early 2000s. The two-disc set features nearly three hours of bathroom humor and poodle humping, plus delightful commentary by creator Robert Smigel. [Release date: July 22]

Freakazoid: The Complete First Season [Warner, \$26.98]

As a bonafide child of the '90s, yours truly is just itching to get a hold of this; but this is no mere cop-out release hoping to be buoyed by a sub-par series' nostalgic appeal: this is *Freakazoid!* The blue-skinned, red-spandex'd superhero created by WB animation all-stars Bruce Timm, Paul Dini and a director called Steven Spielberg! The loveable bumbler brought to life by the comic pen of Hanna-Barbera vet Tom Ruegger (and the team behind *Animaniacs*)! Honestly, whether or not

you were in grade school at the time, this was a darn funny show. Right?

The first season set is comprised of 14 episodes featuring



the geek-turned-freak cyberspace powered crusader on two discs. There is audio commentary on three "key" episodes, and industry pros and fans alike will be interested in a featurette which follows the show's transformation from a classic hero story with comic undertones to a comedy series with heroic undertones.

[Release date: July 29]

Tiny Toon Adventures: Season 1, Vol. 1 [Warner, \$44.98]

Sharing *Freakazoid's* DVD debut is another Spielberg-Dini-Ruegger collab. Created with the prompting of then WB prez Terry Semel, *Tiny Toons* took a cue from other pint-sized reimaginings of the day (*Muppet Babies*, *A Pup Name Scooby-Doo*). What set it apart was the standards it had to live up to as the next gen take on some of the best loved cartoons in animation history: *Looney Tunes*.

Volume one will bring a hefty four-disc collection of 35 season one episodes into U.S. homes for the first time. The set will include the verbosely titled *From Wacky Tunes to Tiny Toons: A Looney Evolution* featurette, packed with enough info to get you an ACME Looniversity degree.

[Release date: July 29] ■

To view a trailer for the *Tiny Toon* and *Freakazoid* DVDs, check out www.animationmagazine.net.

Anime Alert!

Bleach Vol. 11 (VIZ, \$24.98) is out July 22, so save your Pocky money!



The Samurai Critic:

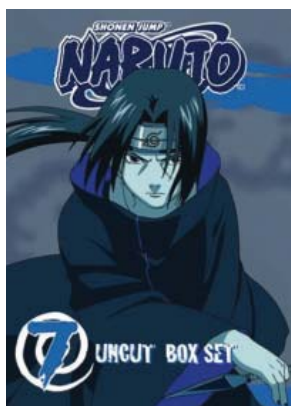
Reviews of the Latest Anime DVD Releases

by Charles Solomon



Could Naruto Uzumaki, the knuckle-headed ninja-in-training, be growing up? **Naruto** ranks among the most popular anime properties of all time, both the animated series and the manga, but the title character has never been a model citizen. No one believes the prankster when he proclaims that one day he will become *Hokage* (the most powerful ninja and therefore head of the Hidden Leaf Village). But none of the villagers realize how much power the rambunctious kid derives from the Nine-Tailed Fox Demon imprisoned within his body. The formidable rebel ninjas Itachi and Kisame covet that power. Jiraiya, the Sage of Toad-Mountain, takes Naruto away from the village to protect him and to further his training, although the ostensible reason for the trip is to find the redoubtable Lady Tsunade, who has been chosen to be the next *Hokage*. Naruto's behavior still won't win any gold stars: He overeats, yells and calls Jiraiya "Pervy Sage" (a title the lecherous, hard-drinking arch-ninja certainly merits). But he works at mastering the powerful new *jutsu* (magical ninja technique) Jiraiya shows him with a single-minded discipline he's never displayed before.

When he defeated Gaara, the homicidal opponent who fought with clouds of enchanted sand, Naruto said he had to grow strong to protect his friends and the Hidden Leaf Village. That's clearly his destiny. But this new-found resolve doesn't prevent this set from delivering the mixture of broad comedy, intense training, magical *jutsu* and unexpected adventures that *Naruto* fans expect. The Special Edition



comes with a collectible figure of the summoning creature, Gamakichi the Toad.

XXXHOLiC (2006) continues the adventures of Yuko, the Dimensional Witch in *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle*. Put-upon high school nerd Kimihiko Watanuki can see evil spirits. When a weirdly amorphous one pursues him, he stumbles into the shop

of Yuko, who will grant any wish—for a price. Through a mixture of trickery, pressure and bargaining, Yuko persuades Watanuki to work for her. His after-school duties include running errands, fetching endless bottles of saké and cooking elaborate meals. He fusses on his own time. Yuko also recruits cheery Himawari, the girl of Watanuki's dreams, and stoic Doumeki, the boy of his nightmares. These ill-assorted characters undertake supernatural adventures at Yuko's behest. Rounding out the cast is a charcoal gray version of Mokona, the squeaky, obnoxiously cute mascot from *Tsubasa*. The artists of the four-woman collective CLAMP give **XXXHOLiC** a sensual, vaguely decadent

look, reminiscent of Symbolist painting. The related feature *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been released in a package with *Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle*: *The Movie: The Princess in the Birdcage*.

The sixth broad-

cast season of **Ranma 1/2** ranks among the silliest installments in a series famed for its take-no-prisoners silliness. Furinken High's resident windbag Kuno suffers an attack of amnesia after a watermelon gets stuck on his head. Ranma fights Sotatsu with giant brushes and ink sticks in a Martial Arts Calligraphy match. As the master of this recherché discipline, Sotatsu initially refused Ranma's challenges because his handwriting was so sloppy. At a small carnival, a horribly cute drawing of a panda comes to life from a scroll and falls for Ranma: Imagine *Hello Kitty* in an amorous mood.

Like *The Simpsons*, *Ranma 1/2* depicts the characters who love each other and drive each other crazy. Director Junji Nishimura allows the sentiment to come through in a Christmas episode, when Ranma buys Akane gifts she actually wants. Ranma, Akane

and Ryoga prevent Furinken from freezing over when they treat a Snow-Woman (*Yuki-onna*) with genuine kindness. These gentler moments notwithstanding, most of the gender-bending misadventures are predicated on the broadest slapstick comedy. When the telepathic Satori visits the Tendo-Saotomi domicile, he screams, "The people in this house are weird!" Which sums up *Ranma 1/2*. Only 1 1/2 inches thick, this slim pack set is a boon for people whose shelves are filling up. ■

Naruto Uncut Box Set 7
(VIZ: \$49.98, three discs)

Ranma 1/2 Season Six:

Random Rhapsody
(VIZ: \$49.98, five discs)

XXXHOLiC: First Collection
(FUNimation: \$29.98)



LEGAL NOTICE

If you directed a motion picture or other work that was not covered by a DGA collective bargaining agreement, you may have a claim in a proposed class action settlement.

A proposed settlement of a class action lawsuit affects you if you ever directed a motion picture, television program, or certain other audio-visual work that was not covered by a Directors Guild of America, Inc. ("DGA") collective bargaining agreement at the time it was produced, and it was aired in certain foreign countries. If you qualify, you may request a payment, or you can exclude yourself from the settlement, or object.

The Superior Court of the County of Los Angeles, California authorized this notice. The Court will have a hearing to consider whether to approve the settlement, so that benefits may be paid.

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

The lawsuit arose as a result of the collection and distribution to directors of levies on blank DVDs and tapes in several foreign nations. Various countries have adopted laws imposing these levies, which are designed to provide compensation to rights holders, including directors of motion pictures and other works. The lawsuit claimed that DGA has failed to properly distribute foreign levies to non-DGA members. DGA denies all allegations and has asserted many defenses. The settlement is not an admission of wrongdoing or an indication that any law was violated.

WHO'S INCLUDED?

You are a Class Member and could get benefits if you are a director who satisfies all of the following three criteria: (1) the motion picture or other work you directed was not covered by any DGA collective bargaining agreement at the time it was produced; (2) DGA has received, on your behalf, levies imposed on your work by foreign jurisdictions; and (3) you were not a DGA member at the time DGA first received foreign levies on your behalf. Excluded from the class are directors, officers, and members of DGA.

WHAT DOES THE SETTLEMENT PROVIDE?

DGA will publish on its website a list of non-DGA member directors to whom at least \$25 of foreign levies have been assigned, but not yet paid. This list of non-DGA member directors will be available no later than three months after the Court approves the settlement. If a user clicks on a name, the titles assigned to that director will appear, and the user will be provided with information to contact DGA for further information about how to receive payment. If a non-DGA member is not listed, but contacts DGA to request payment of foreign levies, DGA will timely fulfill the request if at least \$10 of foreign levies have accrued for that individual.

DGA's website also will include a function that permits non-member directors to register information regarding their works that fit the "Class Member" criteria. This information shall be used for informational purposes only, but may help determine whether payments are due. Class counsel encourages directors to register their information as soon as the registration site becomes active, which will occur no later than three months after the Court approves the settlement, so that these and future foreign levies may be paid to you.

DGA will also engage an accounting firm to conduct an annual review of its foreign levy program. The results of these reviews will be posted on DGA's website.

HOW DO YOU REQUEST A PAYMENT?

If you elect to stay in the Class and are eligible to receive payment, there are two ways to proceed. First, you may visit DGA's website (listed below) to see if you are listed as a non-member director to whom at least \$25 of foreign levies are owed. If so, simply click on your name to obtain information about how to request payment. Second, you may contact DGA to request payment of foreign levies. DGA will timely send payment if at least \$10 in foreign levies have accrued for you.

WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?

If you do not want to be legally bound by the settlement, you must exclude yourself by **July 21, 2008**, or you will not be able to sue, or continue to sue, DGA about the legal claims in this case. If you exclude yourself, you cannot collect a payment from this settlement. If you stay in the Class, you may object to the settlement by **July 21, 2008**. The detailed notice, posted on DGA's website, describes how to exclude yourself or object.

The Court will hold a hearing in this case (William Webb v. Directors Guild of America, Inc., Case No. BC 352621) on **August 26, 2008**, to consider whether to approve the settlement, as well as attorneys' fees and expenses totaling no more than \$400,000. You may appear at the hearing, but you are not required to do so. For more information, visit DGA's website or write to CPT Group, Inc., 16630 Aston Street, Irvine, California, 92606. www.dga.org



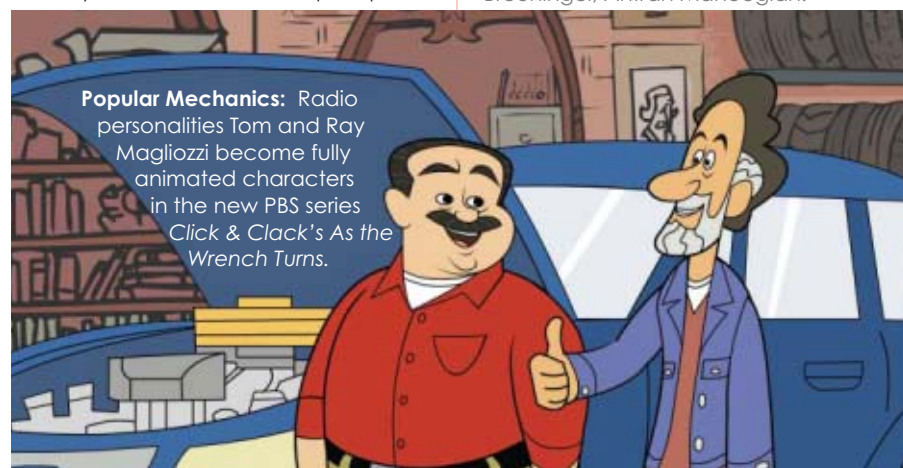
Radio's *Car Talk* Gets A Toon-Up

by Michael Mallory

Let's say you want to create a new primetime animated comedy. You start by bringing together an executive producer who's never done animation, an animation producer who's never done episodic television and a head writer who's never done a TV series of any kind. Then you create a virtual studio production pipeline that criss-crosses the U.S. and Canada and put in charge a director who is new to that way of working. To top it all off, you do the show on a per-episode



Left to right: Tom Minton (seated), Tom Sito, Howard Grossman, Bill Kroyer, Scott Breuninger, Antran Manoogian.



budget that would buy you a thirty-second commercial and put it on a broadcast venue that has never done a primetime animated series before.

In less inspired hands the end result would be a 20-car pile-up. But thanks to the collaboration of such animation notables as Bill Kroyer, Tom Sito, Tom Minton, Floyd Norman, Stephen Silver and Karen Johnson and indie producer Howard K. Grossman, *Click & Clack's As the Wrench Turns*, PBS's animated riff on National Public Radio's *Car Talk*, is purring like a finely tuned motor. "It's working because people who had a special skill were able to master a new area and bring something a little different to it," says Kroyer, executive producer of animation, whose numerous credits include *FernGully: The Last Rainforest* and the live-action CG hybrid features *Scooby-Doo* and *Garfield*.

Car Talk's Click and Clack, the Tappet

Brothers (a.k.a. Tom and Ray Magliozzi, real-life brothers, mechanics and M.I.T. grads) have been dispensing automotive advice and wisecracks to the mechanically challenged for three decades on radio. While they have turned up in guest roles in Pixar's *Cars*, *Click & Clack's As the Wrench Turns* represents their first major involvement in animation. "About seven years ago I sent an e-mail to Doug Berman, who's their executive producer [and the series' head writer] saying I had an idea to do an animated series about Click and Clack," says executive producer Grossman. "When he got back to me he said the guys had always seen themselves as animated characters."

In developing the series, the production team strove not to fix what wasn't broken. "We were not going to change what works for Click and Clack," says Sito, who is directing the show. "The problem was, how

do you transfer a radio program to a visual medium?" Part of the solution was to create a stable of supporting characters for the brothers to play off of, all of whom were given a sixties underground comics-style flavor by character designer Silver.

Sito also stressed visual fidelity to the Magliozzis' Eastern urban headquarters. "We wanted to make it a Boston show, not just a generic place," he says. "If you see a bus go by, it's got the right colors, and the skyline looks correct. I also told the artists I wanted a pile of newspapers here and galoshes there, or a bicycle that somebody has left, or a note taped on the mailbox. To me all those details make the show more fun and interesting."

Pre-production work was handled at the specially-formed CTTV studio in L.A., and the 2D animation was done in Vancouver at Atomic Cartoons, whose artists used Flash 8. "But if you look at this show," Grossman says, "you really don't have a clue that it's Flash." So what's the secret to raising the bar on Flash? "I guess if you start with people who never really worked in Flash, they don't know what it's supposed to do or not do," says Kroyer.

Despite the miles covered by the production—voice tracks are recorded in both Boston and New York (with guest bits from public radio and TV stalwarts like newsman Jim Lehrer and comedian Garrison Keillor phoned in from wherever), music by the Grammy-winning band Brave Combo is recorded in Texas and post-production is done back in New York—there are no reported breakdowns or SIG alerts. "This is the nature of modern production," Kroyer says. "It doesn't matter if somebody's one floor down from you or 300 miles away, you're still transferring files in basically the same way."

Even though Brad Bird threatens to fly south when he hears them say it, it looks like the Tappet brothers are bonafide toons. ■

***Click & Clack's As the Wrench Turns* will premiere as a one-hour block Wednesday, July 9, on PBS.**

The Dawn of a New Era?

Cartoon Network's new initiative promises to act as a think tank designed to foster bold, new animated projects by artists. **by Ramin Zahed**

What's going on at Cartoon Network? That seems to be the question many animation fans were asking themselves ever since they spotted reruns of awful sitcoms (*Saved by the Bell*, anyone?) and live-action shows such as *Tim and Eric Awesome Show Great Job* and *Saul of The Mole Men* on the sacred [adult swim] block. Some have a hard time believing that this is the same Turner outfit whose first broadcast was the Bugs Bunny short *Rhapsody Rabbit* back in October of 1992.

To be fair, you can't fight the numbers. Last November, the cabler shattered its ratings record with *Ben 10: Race Against Time*, the live-action feature based on its popular animated series. Not surprisingly, another live-action sequel is in the works. It's not easy waging a cartoon battle against the huge numbers delivered by live-action shows such as Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana*, *High School Musical* and Nickelodeon's *Drake and Josh* and *iCarly*.

Nevertheless, some may argue that the cabler is going through a period of redefining itself. In June, CN introduced a killer Thursday night block of animated comedies, anchored by *The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack*, a beautifully animated new series created by newcomer Thurop Van Orman. Award-winning artist-driven toons such as C.H. Greenblatt's *Chowder* and Craig McCracken's much-loved *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends* continue to draw fans. A re-designed and aged-up *Ben 10: Alien Force* is also performing well for the cabler. Meanwhile, the network is also hosting Kids' WB! orphans such as *Skunk Fu!* and *Johnny Test* and outside acquisitions such as Nelvana's *Bakugan Battle Brawlers* and Fresh TV/Teletoon's *Total Drama*

Island. CN is also serving up movies such as *Ant Bully*, *Monster House*, *Hoodwinked* and *Open Season* on Sunday evenings.

Also, with the new *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* show and Jay Stephens' promising new series *The Secret Saturdays* (about a family of cool, secret scientists) blasting off in the fall, the future looks promising.

A Toon Think Tank

The more exciting news for the creative community is that Cartoon Network's new chief content officer Rob Sorcher has tapped two of the network's beloved animation producers—Craig McCracken (*Foster's Home*, *Powerpuff Girls*) and Rob Renzetti (*My Life as a Teenage Robot*) to spearhead a development initiative named Cartoonstitute at the Burbank studio. The plan is to create 13 half-hour shows—each of which has three featured segments. Each mini-segment will be seven minutes long—it's up to the creators to break those seven minutes down to their specific desired length. These artist-driven animated projects will hopefully help jumpstart new series and online projects in the next year and a half.

"Our goal is to create a gigantic set of content that we can feature across all platforms and make Cartoon Net-

work opportunity to show us what they like to create without a traditional studio development pipeline," says McCracken. "A good idea may be interesting and compelling, but it can be made terrible in the wrong hands; or a simple-sounding idea can be wonderful with the right approach and execution."

As an example, McCracken points to the Annie-nominated short *Adventure Time* by Pendleton Ward, who is now working on the network's *Flapjack*. "The quick pitch of Penn's short may sound familiar, which is 'a boy and his dog have adventures and rescue a princess.' But when you see the short, you know that it's far from ordinary ... and it's such a unique and original short. Rob and I want to give artists like Penn a chance to show us their talent." (*Adventure Time* was a short executive produced by Fred Seibert for Nickelodeon's *Random! Cartoons* initiative.)

"There aren't going to be a lot of no's," adds Renzetti. "We want to try to say yes as much as possible. Of course



Craig McCracken



Rob Renzetti



Rob Sorcher



Thurop Van Orman

"We want to be the most artist-friendly incubator in town. If people are going to be watching cartoons with a chip in their heads in the future, we want to be producing cartoons for those chips!"

—Rob Renzetti, animator and supervising producer, Cartoon Network's Cartoonstitute program

work studios the place that innovative animators want to bring their work to in TV," says Sorcher.

"We are looking for great ideas and new concepts and to allow artists the

the more we know about the person, the more familiar we are with their artistic vision, the more latitude we can give them."

Renzetti and McCracken hope to

give artists much more freedom than the traditional TV development pipelines have done in the past. "There are a lot of good people who work in development," says McCracken, "but at the end of the day, the fact that they are not artists gives them less confidence to give up control. We want to let the artists do what they do best, and that's to draw. You don't hire a painter and ask them to write a story about painting."

Renzetti also points out that they're likely to greenlight the shorts based on storyboards. "Bring your drawings and talk about the show. Our prejudice is toward artists and creators, but we're not going to exclude pitches from writers. If you're a writer, we'll look at the scripts."

Toon fans realize that back in the mid '90s, both McCracken and Renzetti worked at a similar think tank at Cartoon Network known as *World Premiere Toons* (also known as *What a Cartoon! Show*) which served as the launching pad of numerous toons including *Dexter's Laboratory*, *Johnny Bravo*, *Cow and Chicken*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Courage the Cowardly Dog*. That project was conceived and produced by none other than Fred Seibert, the mind behind Channel Frederator.

"We are really looking for a diverse selection," says Renzetti. "Humor and story are key factors, just as it was for *What a Cartoon!* But a network can stagnate when you stick to a certain style. We want to loosen that up. We don't want to do impersonations or shows that have come before. You also have to keep in mind that this isn't [adult swim]. You can't do extreme stuff, but we want to be as open-minded as possible."

One thing artists should avoid when pitching their material is imitating regular Cartoon Network shows. "We want sincerity," says McCracken. "We don't want them to manufacture a show that



they think will fit Cartoon Network's profile. They've got to have a passion for the story. The worst thing to say is 'I don't care about this idea, but I think it will sell.' No, this show is going to consume your life so it's got to be something that means something to you. It cannot be plastic and manufactured."

McCracken and Renzetti are also forward to adding a web component to their new venture. They believe it's a perfect way to get instant feedback

from their target audience. "We want to be the most artist-friendly incubator in town," says Renzetti. "It's to our advantage to find them the next generation of creative artists and give them the opportunities that we were given in the '90s. We want this place to be around for a long time. If people are going to be watching cartoons with a chip in their heads in the future, we want to be producing cartoons for those chips!" ■

Greenlight Express

Five top TV development gurus offer tips on the fine art of pitching your ideas for a new animated show.

by Chris Grove



Roland Poindexter



Eric Homan



Khaki Jones



Lou Wallach



Eric Coleman

When it comes to pitching that big idea to a network, all young animators should have it as lucky as Matt Groening. But they might not want to count on the unique concatenation of forces that led to Groening's successful, on-the-fly presentation to one of the most influential TV producers of his time.

The oft-repeated story of Groening's pitch to producer/director/writer James Brooks and Fox executives in 1987 is so good that it should be apocryphal. But it's not. While the network was interested in a TV version of Groening's *Life in Hell* comic strip, Groening had other plans. Reportedly concerned about losing the rights to *Hell*, he quickly sketched a prototype of Homer, Marge and the kids as he sat in the waiting room. And then went into the meeting and winged it. The network bought the idea as a series of shorts for the *Tracey Ullman Show*.

Five key development execs interviewed for this article sing from more or less the same song sheet: Before you walk into the room, do your homework, have an idea you're totally passionate about and be prepared for anything. As you'll see though, there are some key areas of difference between executives.

The panel:

Roland Poindexter, VP, Current Series Animation, Nickelodeon

Eric Homan, VP of Development, Frederator

Khaki Jones, VP, Original Series for Cartoon Network

Lou Wallach, Senior VP, Original Programming Comedy Central, Television & Digital

Eric Coleman, Senior VP, Development, Walt Disney Television Animation

Animag: What are your top dos and don'ts for people coming to pitch an idea to you and your team?

Coleman: There's no clear answer on that. You need to make an impression. You need to make a connection with the executive and spark an interest in your idea. That'll go a long way to forgive some nerves on the part of the presenter. And while having a clear series description, a developed character list and a few episode ideas is the best way to be prepared it's not advisable to have everything set in stone. We want an exciting idea that we can develop into a great series.

Jones: Know the network you're pitching to and their audience and direction. Create a unique world. Know your characters and how they would react in any situation. Provide impact and give the executives in the room (and audience) something to bet on that only your talent can provide (such as great timing, awesome humor, fantastic designs). Don't feel you have to have full outlines/scripts/boards written upon first conversation—walking in with concept and designs is fine. Don't assume one show will work for every network. Don't imitate the last successful show in your genre. If you need to break into song, do it. I tend to enjoy talking to the artist without them having to be on a stage, but animation is a boisterous, fun medium and sometimes the pitch has to reflect that.

Poindexter: Come with a clear idea of your characters and their relationships with one another as well as individual characteristics, the underlying conceit of your idea, some artwork is nice (but not necessary) and a couple of brief story ideas.

Homan: If you can, get to know the person you're pitching to before you show them your projects. A song? Whatever works for you. During his *Adventure Time* pitch, Penn Ward sang and played his

guitar a la Jonathan Richman. It was a lot of fun.

Wallach: Everyone has his or her own strengths and shortcomings; pitch in the format in which you are most comfortable. Play to your strong suit. You have one 30-minute meeting to sell an idea that could be the basis for 100 episodes! So it has to be exceptional.

AM: Does bringing storyboards help? If so, how detailed?

Poindexter: Storyboards don't really help that much. It's probably more material than we're really going to have time to go through in a pitch. I'm always more than happy to give you my full attention for one hour. When that time's up, I really need to wrap things up and move on with my day (I'm always pretty busy!)

Homan: For our shorts programs, we ultimately require very rough storyboards to get the green light. It's like bringing sheet music to a music publisher rather than just describing what the song will sound like. There's a big difference between telling what you're going to do and showing it.

Jones: We don't typically look at boards in the first pitch since there could be some back and forth creatively on the concept. However, boards are a fantastic way to showcase your talent. As the idea and pitch progress it can provide a great way to visually show story and gags and highlight what's unique about your execution of the idea. The best idea could be to pick a scene and thumbnail it so the executive would understand how you pull the visuals and story together. Since development can be collaborative you don't want to do too much work ahead of the game, but if you've got the materials then feel free to bring them.

AM: What's the best way to practice your pitch before you get your time in the office?

Jones: Don't feel you have to memorize or read the pitch to everyone in the room. Just

have the ability to talk about the characters and world rather deeply. Then top line a few story ideas that showcase the characters. If you're living and breathing [your] show then the pitch will probably be very natural and conversational in a way that you don't have to practice over and over.

Poindexter: I used to practice in my office alone. But it's probably best to pitch to one person that you trust to be brutally honest. (And don't cry if they are.)

AM: What kind of programming is in hot demand right now?

Wallach: For us, anything that's distinctly "Comedy Central," which I know is kind of hard to define. But we look for programming that's raw, honest, unpretentious and irreverent. But not envelope-pushing just for the sake of pushing the envelope.

Poindexter: We're looking for the same thing we've always been on the hunt for: Engaging premises, iconic characters, unique storytelling and unique and progressive visuals wrapped up in a funny, funny package. The industry calls this kind of production a Nicktoon!

Homan: As independent producers, we try not to get bogged down in networks' criteria of the month. From the moment you find a project you want to get behind and the time you present it, that "hot demand" will probably be different. Look at the game-changing TV cartoons of the past two decades, like *Beavis and Butthead*, *Ren & Stimpy*, *SpongeBob* and *South Park*. My guess is networks weren't on the lookout for any of those shows. If an executive tells me the sole reason he's not interested in a project is because it doesn't fit that week's agenda, he probably wouldn't have been interested anyway.

Jones: For us, on the comedy animation side, we need character driven comedies, traditional or CG. Creator-driven, standout shows will always rise to the top, regardless of any "no superheroes" or "no otters" policies. Execution is king and it trumps mandates almost every single time.

Coleman: We're looking for the next big thing. If we knew what that was we'd be ahead of the game! That's why we tend to focus on talent we

know or have worked with before. If you're relatively new to the business I'd say the best thing to do is to get some series experience and start to build your network of colleagues. We're not solely interested in ideas but also who's going to make it into a series.

AM: What's the best pitch you ever saw and what made it so great?

Poindexter: I've seen so many pitches in my career, I couldn't tell you what was the best. I can tell you who was the best pitcher, however: Andy Heyward from DIC. Between the big bold pieces of art that he brings to a pitch and his witty, engaging manner, you almost forget he's there to pitch you anything at all. You can just sit back and enjoy the show!

Homan: Probably the storyboard pitches by Butch Hartman and Doug TenNapel. They're

Coleman: Stephen Hillenburg's *SpongeBob* pitch when I was at Nickelodeon. He came in with an aquarium, fish characters and a seashell that played Hawaiian music. He brought the characters to life and clearly communicated who they were and the world in which they lived. It was amazing. It was all there from Day One.

AM: What's the one thing above all else that can send a pitch session south in a hurry?

Poindexter: For me, it's trying to cram too many ideas into one pitch session. If you don't have a passion for what you're pitching and you throw several things up on the wall to see what sticks, how do I know you're going to have the talent and passion to work with me to deliver a show that kids will love and that will become a big hit for the network?

AM: What's the worst pitch you ever saw and what made it such a disaster?

Poindexter: Someone sang during the pitch. I've completely forgotten the idea, but not this guy standing in front of me looking me in the eyes and singing. I still have nightmares!

Jones: When two co-creators began arguing with each other in the room. It was clear they hadn't agreed on key creative points for the show, and the room got tense quickly. We ended up having to comfort and calm them rather than be-

The Simpsons



SpongeBob SquarePants



"Look at the game-changing TV cartoons of the past decades—my guess is networks weren't on the lookout for any of those shows!"

—Eric Homan, VP of development, Frederator

Ren & Stimpy



South Park



funny guys, great storytellers and know their characters inside and out.

Jones: The best was unfortunately for a show we didn't pick up. The pitch was a lot of fun and seemed well thought out, but at each step it became obvious that the talent did a better job selling the idea than executing the idea. Some of our favorite shows spring from very small first meetings with a core idea that builds and builds in the creator's imagination as each day, week and month passes.

Wallach: The *Freak Show* pitch by David Cross and H. Jon Benjamin. There were no visuals, just them talking. Great characters. Great jokes. It was the funniest pitch I've ever heard.

ing able to concentrate on the idea at hand.

AM: One final question to Lou Wallach. Your position also includes developing programming for Comedy Central's online platforms. How could or should that fit into the development of a concept to pitch to you and your team?

Wallach: I couldn't do my job without the resources of the web. It's always better to have many choices and many voices. I'd just remind people with program ideas that Comedy Central's web presence isn't just a farm team for the network. It's many things: It's web for the web's sake. It's also the web for TV's sake. Just as our TV platform is there both for its own sake and the web. ■



Animation Magazine's Seventh Annual Pitch Party!

What makes a great pitch for an animated show? Some believe that it's the ability to capture the imagination of a development executive with a striking image and a promising premise. We were fortunate to receive many great entries from this year's Pitch Party participants. This annual "party" is really an extremely targeted ad campaign designed to help indie and up-an-upcoming artists present their pitches to an expert panel of industry execs, agents and creative talent. The contestants who purchased a 1/6 page ad in this issue got the opportunity to display their colorful ideas to these powerful execs and the animation community at large. We're thrilled to announce that this year's

top prize winner was a tie and it will be shared by two talented contestants, **Brian Smith** (*Lerning Is Fub*) and **Mike Jones** (*RIP Alice*). As part of the prize package, they'll also be reimbursed their entry fee. On behalf of all of us at *Animation Magazine*, we wish Brian and Mike the best in their toon career.

We'd also like to thank each one of you talented 2008 contenders. Remember to keep polishing and re-imagining your ideas. If anything, we hope that this contest sparked a little light bulb above your heads, one that will keep shining on new pitches, characters and promising situations in the years ahead. As a wise man once said, "Nothing encourages creativity like the chance to fall flat on one's feet!"

Let's Hear It For Our Awesome Panel of Judges (and their favorite pitches!)



Karen Toliver

VP of development, 20th Century Fox Animation

Favorite: *Evil Genius Academy*



Daniel Wineman

Director of original series and co-productions, Jetix Europe

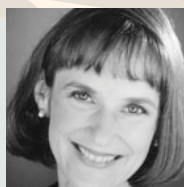
Favorites: *Big Foot: Park Ranger*, *Lerning Is Fub*, *Evil Genius Academy*



David Wiebe

Director of content, YTV, Corus Entertainment

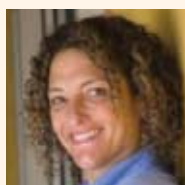
Favorite: *RIP Alice*



Julie Kane-Ritsch

Exec VP, The Gotham Group

Favorites: *Lerning Is Fub*, *Sign with Sally*, *Big Foot: Park Ranger*, *Lemonade*



Alex Schwartz

Head of development, DreamWorks Animation

Favorites: *Skairdy Kats*, *House of Woaaa*



Roland Poindexter

VP of current series animation for Nickelodeon

Favorites: *Tag*, *Rocket*, *Lerning Is Fub*, *Zyclops*



Damon Ross

Senior VP, DreamWorks Animation

Favorites: *Skairdy Kats*, *Lerning Is Fub*, *Knight & Gail*, *Axeion*, *Plush Life*



Rob Renzetti

Supervising producer of Cartoon Network's Cartoonstitute

Favorites: *Zyclops*, *Bitter Little Racoon*



Chris Kuser

Senior development exec, DreamWorks Animation

Favorites: *House of Woaaa*, *My Pet Zombie*, *Evil Genius Academy*, *Happiest Bunnies*, *Haroldry*



Matt Harrigan

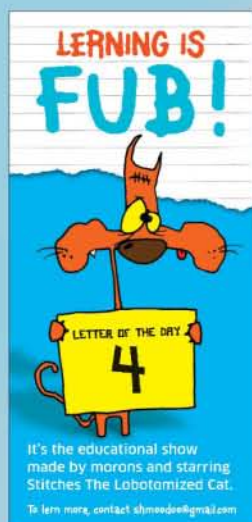
Head of program development for [adult swim]

Favorite: *Tag*, *RIP Alice*, *Lerning Is Fub*

You can talk about your favorite Pitch Party entries and discuss the judges' picks at Animation Magazine's Online Forum <http://www.animationmagazine.net/forum/>

Our 2008 Winners

First Place Tie: Lerning Is Fub (Brian Smith)



You've got to give it to Brian Smith, who works at Toronto's sound and design outfit, Eggplant Collective. He won top prize last year with his "King of the Universe" pitch, and placed second in 2006 with "Monster in a Box." This year he had everyone giggling with his "educational show made by morons and starring Stitches the Lobotomized Cat." All it takes is one look at the goofy look on his feline host (and the stitch on his forehead) and we sold. The judges said they got a big kick out of the twisted humor, the clean design and the fact that you can tell immediately what you're getting with this show.

"I think this one may be most at home as a series of shorts for the Internet," wrote

Gotham Group's Julie Kane-Ritsch. "There's a definite potential for a funny show here." A couple of the judges thought it would be more appropriate for an adult channel, as "it won't be right for the six to 11 set!"

Smith says winning the Pitch Party opens new doors for his company and has landed him several fruitful industry meetings in the past. His advice for future contestants? "It's really important to come up with an idea that is simple to convey: the best idea you have may not be the best Pitch Party idea. If it can't be conveyed in the space of a business card, it doesn't matter if it's the next *Simpsons*!" Personally, we would love to see *Lerning Is Fub* become the next *Simpsons*!

First Place Tie: RIP Alice (Mike Jones, Capilano College)

Mike Jones, a 26-year-old first-year student at North Vancouver's Capilano College came up with a nice twist on the fish-out-of-water concept: a toon about a big city Goth girl who has to learn how to cope with the simple pleasures of a small-town lifestyle. Don Perro, who heads up the animation program at Capilano, presented the competition to their animation/design students and their top six ideas made it to our Pitch Party pages.

"RIP Alice was an idea that had formulated in my head over the last few months, having just moved to a big city for the first time," says Mike. "Traveling on the bus each day I'd see all kinds of young people who seemed like their only job was to look cool and hip ... I found it very funny how they would complain about the most superficial things."

Mike says he grew up on the *Looney Tunes* and *Tom & Jerry* shorts and would love to explore the world of animation as best he can. "I'd like to take a stab at 3D animation, although I don't think I'll ever be able to put away my sketch book," he adds. "Character design and development is where I'm strongest. Ultimately though, I'd like to work my way toward being a director. Excellent storytelling is becoming rare, so it's something I'm really looking to learn more about." We're hoping that Alice the Goth girl will open a whole lot of doors for this talented artist in the years ahead.



Second Place: The House of Woooo (Colleen Thomas, Capilano College)

First-year Capilano College (in North Vancouver) student Colleen Thomas put a fun spin on the old werewolf mystery tales, which appealed to our judges. "It started with the idea of these two odd kids being the caretaker, for their grandpa, but something had to be horribly wrong," says the talented 24-year-old artist. "I've always liked action-adventure cartoons best, and I draw a lot of monsters and scrappy kids, so it seemed like a natural combination. It's the kind of story that I would like to work on, or to watch—That's what I tried to think of." Many of our judges also wanted to see Colleen's vision come to animated life.



Third Place: Tag (Mike Chapman, SCAD)

Mike, a senior at Savannah's College of Art and Design, says he wanted to create a short that was simple, yet very cinematic. "I liked the idea of thinking of the robot as the kid's best friend combined with the devotion and playfulness of a dog," he explains. "Tag is basically about love, and what you would do to save what you love." Mike learned about the Pitch Party through SCAD chair of animation Jeremy Moorshead, who generously sponsored six of the school's students. He says his senior project will be a short based on his pitch. He adds, "I think most people enter this field because they have a story to tell, something that they think about day and night. It's a wonderful thing when we are given a chance to bring some of these ideas to light." We have a feeling Mike's work will get a lot of more recognition once he finishes his senior project.



Animation Magazine Staff Picks

First Place: Lerning Is Fub (Brian Smith, Eggplant)

Second Place: The Princess & The Mermaid (Jo Reid, Capilano College)

Third Place: Cow Kitty (E. Mullock, Capilano College)

Honorable Mention: Evil Genius Academy (Lee Sheppard)



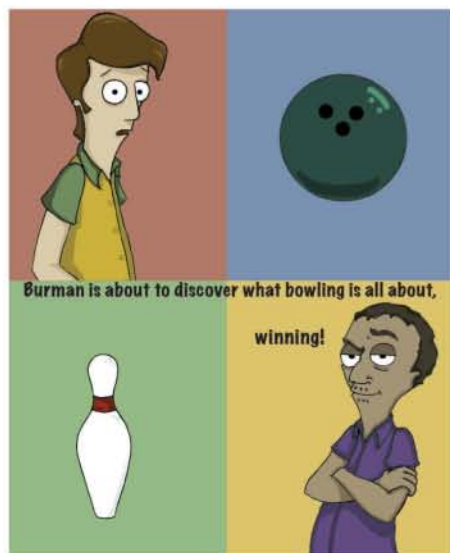
Online Readers Picks

First Place: That Intellectual Wacky Show (Ariel Quezada)

Second Place: Rocket (Daniel Contois)

Third Place: The Boogie Woogies, Superhero Band (Grande Musical Promotions, Selina Box)





Nicky Mula presents
Pins Will Fall

Can Burman find the inspiration to defeat his debonair opponent?

nimula20@student.scad.edu

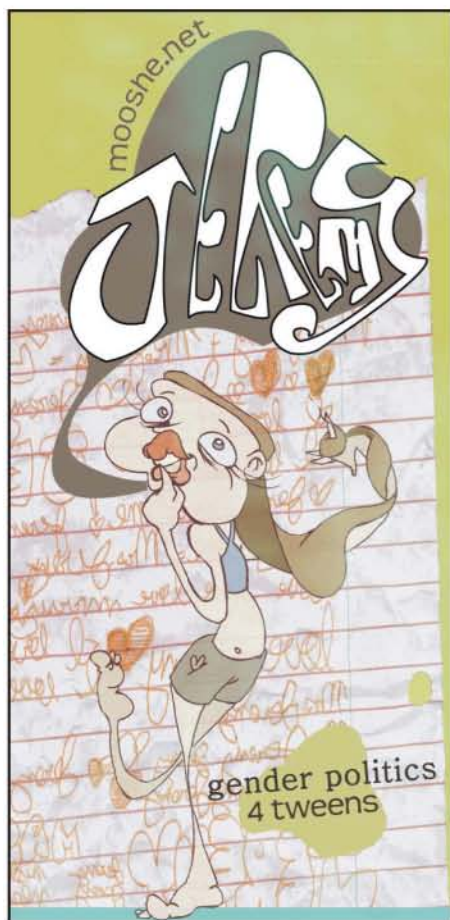
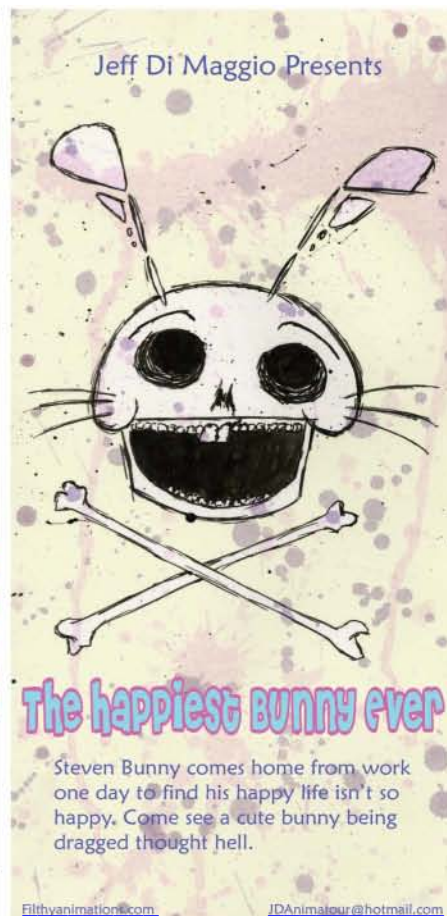
mulamotion.webs.com

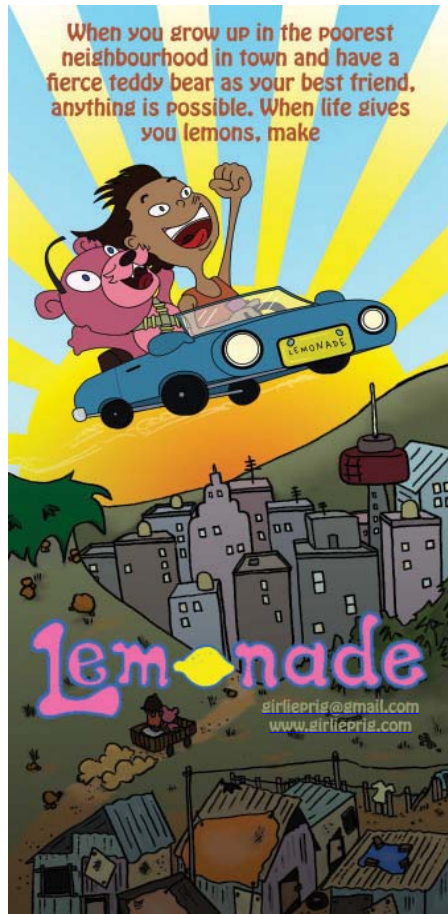


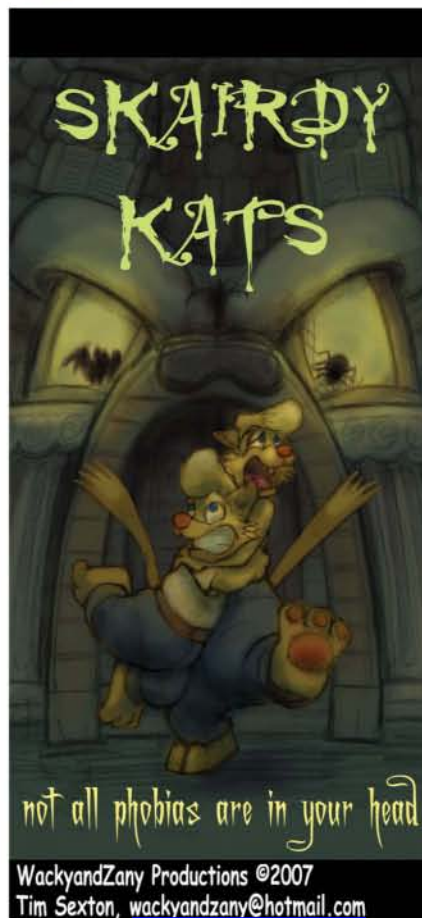
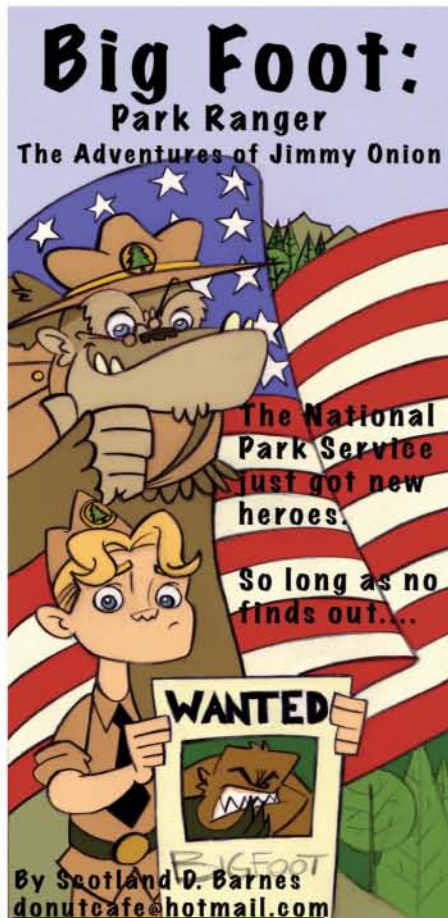
Hidden in the Treehouse of Solitude, a legend is born. Absent of superpowers, there's a flowing pink cape. Follow Fuperman and sidekick Scabies through misadventures lacking great power and responsibility.

Aaron J Deerfield
adeerfield@gmail.com

Michael Milano
spinfaces@gmail.com







ACADEMY of ART UNIVERSITY
FOUNDED IN SAN FRANCISCO 1929
BY ARTISTS FOR ARTISTS

Study Online or On Campus
AA | BFA | MFA Degrees

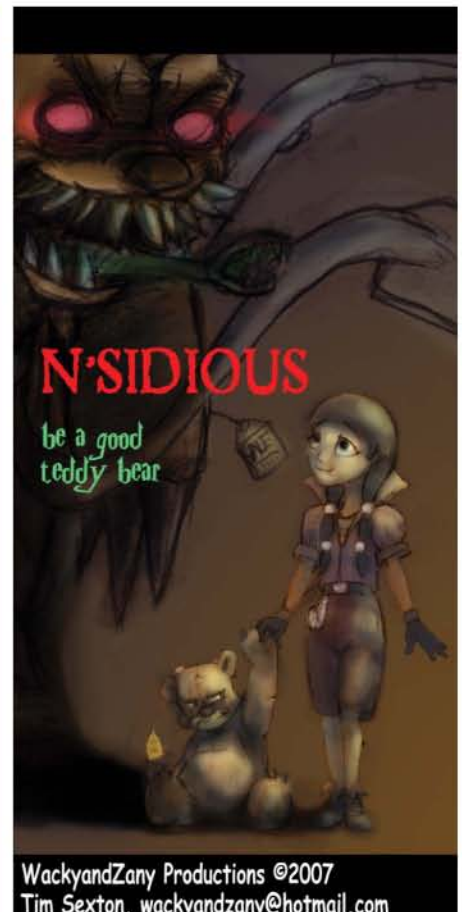
ANIMATION + VISUAL EFFECTS

2D & 3D Character Animation,
Stop Motion Animation, 3D Modeling,
Game Design, Compositing,
Visual Effects, Storyboarding,
Visual Development, Maquette
Sculpting, Background Layout
Design, and more!

1.800.544.2787
www.academyart.edu

79 NEW MONTGOMERY ST.,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

Accredited member WASC, NASAD
Council for Interior Design Accreditation
(BFA-IAD), NAAB (M-ARCH)



Chronicles of Cohen®

Vol. 1 Nails in the coffin



COHEN IS CALLED UPON TO PUT THE "NAILS IN THE COFFIN!" THIS HERO DOESN'T MIND SUFFERING, IF IT LEADS TO A LITTLE TWISTED FUN!

STAN@BLACKPOINTSTUDIOS.COM
415 205 2377
WWW.BLACKPOINTSTUDIOS.COM

ROCKET

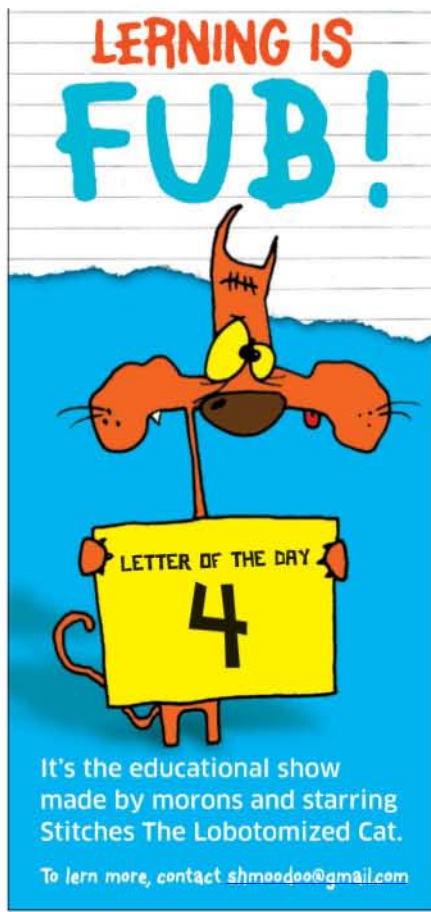
HOLD ON TO YOUR SENSORY RECEPTORS, THE SUPER-ELITE AIELX SPACE ACADEMY HAS JUST RECRUITED ITS NEWEST STUDENT AND...yuck... IT'S A HUMAN!



NEW SCHOOL.
NEW FRIENDS.
NEW SOLAR-SYSTEM.

www.danielcontoais.com (917) 561-7443

LEARNING IS FUB!



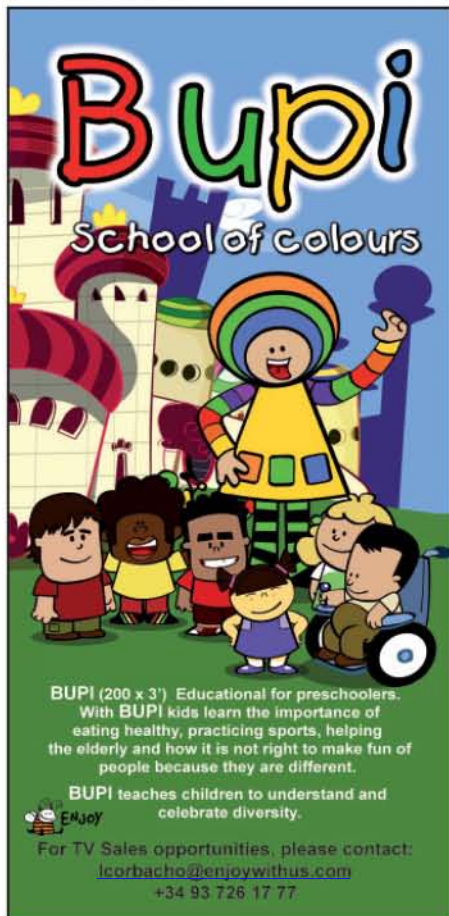
LETTER OF THE DAY
4

It's the educational show made by morons and starring Stitches The Lobotomized Cat.

To learn more, contact shmaodoo@gmail.com

Bupi

School of colours



BUPI (200 x 3") Educational for preschoolers. With BUPI kids learn the importance of eating healthy, practicing sports, helping the elderly and how it is not right to make fun of people because they are different.

BUPI teaches children to understand and celebrate diversity.

For TV Sales opportunities, please contact:
lcorbacho@enjoywithus.com
+34 93 726 17 77

Knight & Gail

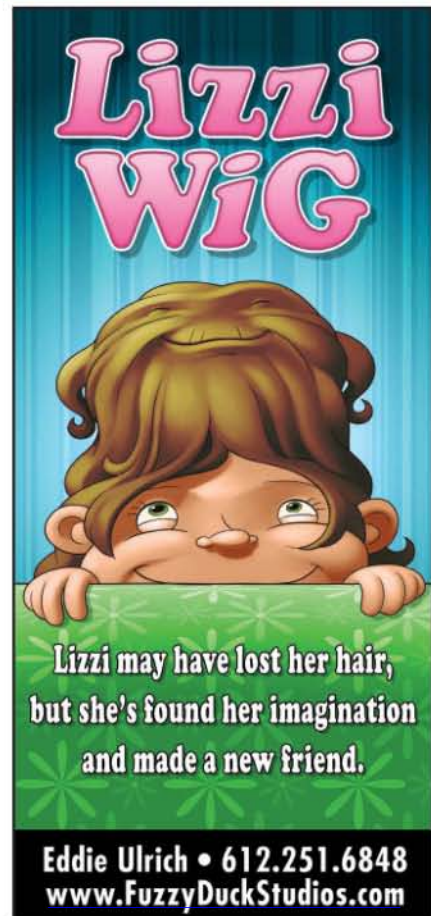


His Mission: Find the rightful heir to his forgotten kingdom and return her safely to the throne.

Her Mission: Get through high school without anyone noticing.

Eddie Ulrich • 612.251.6848
www.FuzzyDuckStudios.com

Lizzi WiG



Lizzi may have lost her hair, but she's found her imagination and made a new friend.

Eddie Ulrich • 612.251.6848
www.FuzzyDuckStudios.com

FAIR & SQUARE



* REAL TIME 3D, VOICE & ACTING *

SHUT UP

PEOPLE WILL LISTEN!

FAIR-AND-SQUARE.COM

The weird things in life that you think only happen to you. Come join the "What" family and see that you're not alone in this world.

Funkin Donuts



"What Family"

www.meaculpa123ks@aol.com

Kim Sarkies 786-271-1183

www.whatfamily.com

THE SUPERHOLIDAYS



Four kids use the power of giving, love, thanks, and knowledge to battle their next door neighbor, Evil Jack.

THEME SONG by THE SCHOOL OF ROCK.
PREMIERING AT CINEQUEST 2009.

TheSuperHolidays.com
323.287.8887

Chess Hooligans.
Municipal Vampires.
Cyborg Public Accountants.

Even the future
can't outrun its past.

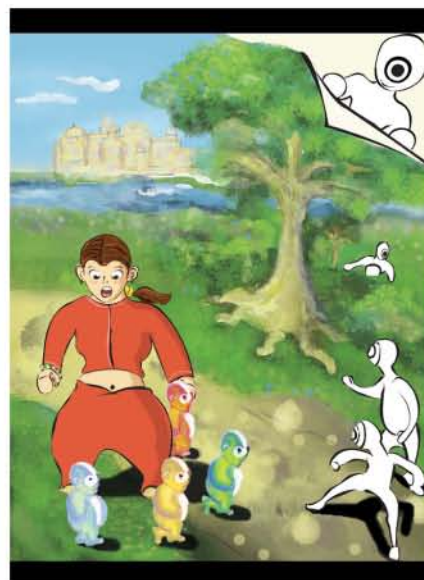
REX RAYGUN

The cure for
this sick world
is a man with
a very
uncommon
cold.



web: www.rexraygun.com
email: rexraygun@yahoo.com

Princess Lokoni
and The Noble Four



Princess Lokoni and the noble four do battle against the mischievous mirror men. Guiding four elemental beings, she vanquishes the shape shifting illusionists and banishes them back to their realm.

Kevin Minott kevdwain@hotmail.com



myspace.com/toffeebrown
mtpiggybank@yahoo.com

...a vindictive 80's fashion designer, an overly narcissistic supermodel, and a feisty superhero that's 'brown sugar & spice and nothin' nice! ...

-- a 2.25 x 4.875" box can't possibly contain such madness.

© MARLON T. BANKS

RAYBEEZ

THE MERCENARY

At the nucleus of an unstable universe, an ominous threat has emerged.



In space
Only mercenaries
can hear you scream.

melvincruz66@sbcglobal.net
Home: 847-244-8481

MidEvil

A timid prince, a mischievous village idiot, an outcast royal scientist and a stoner dragon...




All the Kings' horses and all the Kings' men cannot put this Kingdom back together again!

mhellige@gmail.com
516.851.2468

XTREME INSTALLERZ

CAR-TUNE CARTOONZ



Boring
Part-time
Jobs by
Day...

Get Down
to the
SHOP!

XTREME GENIE

XTREME Automobile Installation by NIGHT!

mikerenschler@yahoo.com

Professor Itchy Cooley



INVENTING
IS MY GAME -
WORLD
DOMINATION
WILL BE
MY FAME!
HOW HARD
COULD
THAT BE?

For ALL the EVIL DETAILS, contact:
FRANK ITALIANO Jr.
FITAL@aol.com
www.FITALINC.com

COOKING with SAM 'n ELLA



"Sam... I said boil your linguine — not your weenie!"

Laugh the pounds off as learning how to cook will never be the same!

For ALL the DELICIOUS DETAILS, contact:
FRANK ITALIANO Jr.
FITAL@aol.com
www.FITALINC.com

5 SECOND RULE

Good news, slobs!

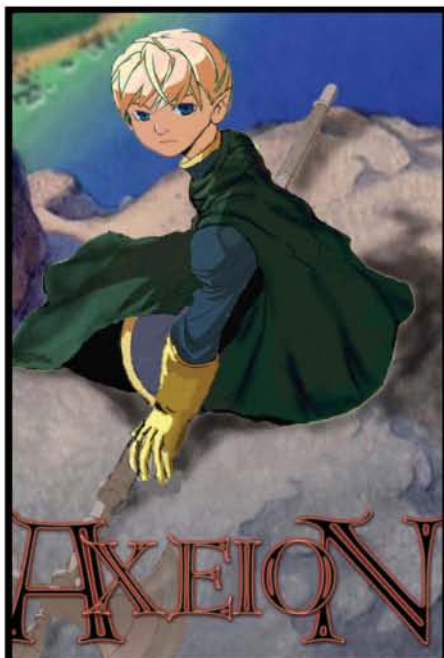
Reputable germs confess
and fake doctors confirm ...



"You have exactly 5 seconds
to pick up and safely eat
any dropped food"

WANT TO KNOW WHY?

rhymniboy@hotmail.com
redd miller

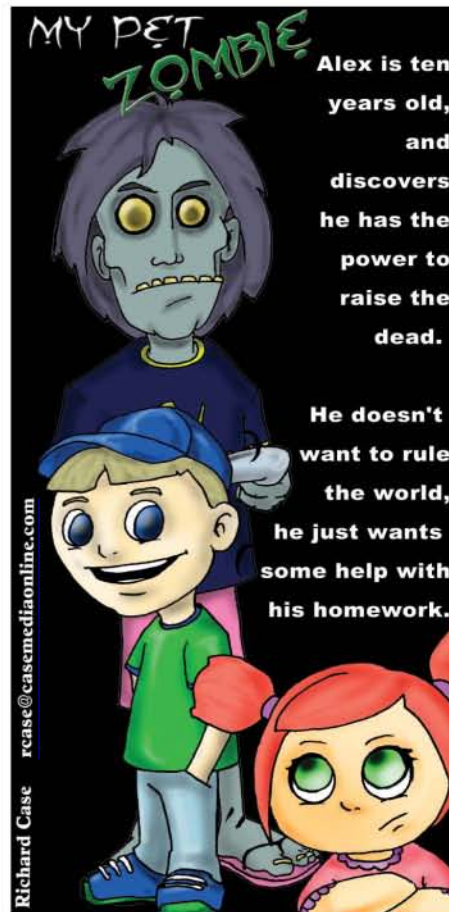


He is born of a god and a man.
And to stop the impending doom
of the world. He must become
greater than both.

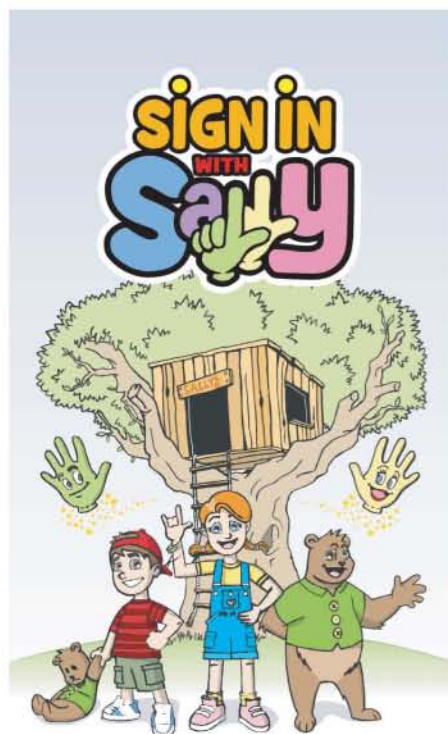
Richard Case rcase@casemediaonline.com



Richard Case rcase@casemediaonline.com

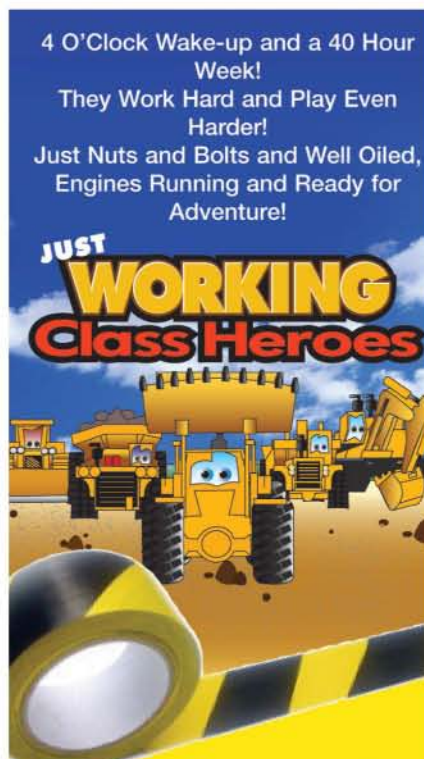


Richard Case rcase@casemediaonline.com



Sally's imagination takes viewers to far-away lands... When her deaf teddy bear comes to life, she and her brother must use sign language to succeed in Imaginary Land.

Lockhart Entertainment, LLC
info@lockhartentertainment.com



Construction Equipment for Hire!
For Info, Contact:
stake.blake@charter.net
(203) 231-2118
Story by Steve, Zack and Emma



BRENNAN

BOBBY

Wally Wood

ZACK

www.thebutterflyprincemovie.com 904-705-3232

NEH-MIA and MACHU




An epic tale of a child's quest...
to destroy a curse bestowed upon her world.

www.neh-mia.com info@neh-mia.com

The fantastical adventures of... The Boogie Woogies

superhero band




sometimes happiness needs a helping hand.

admin@theboogiewoogies.com.au
+617 3288 5890 www.theboogiewoogies.com.au

THESE PUNKS HAVE TO GET THE GALACTIC POLICE OFF THEIR CASE, MERCENARIES OFF THEIR TRAIL, AND EX'S OFF THEIR BACKS...
...ALL FOR STEALING THE *WRONG THING!*

SPACE PUNKS



5'0"
4'6"
4'0"
3'6"

WHAT

WWW.SPACEPUNKS.COM
JOSEPHBLAS@GMAIL.COM

He was a little boy in a big world
now he is a BIG boy in a little world




PADDY PAGE

LONDON | LOS ANGELES | TOKYO | SYDNEY | TORONTO | SINGAPORE

Toonz Animation India Pvt Ltd
Phone: + 91 471 2700928, 3042500,
Fax : +91 471 2700954
toonzz@toonzanimationindia.com,
www.toonzanimationindia.com




THE FATE OF THE HUMAN RACE
RESTS ON ONE MAN'S
DANCE MOVES...



...AND HE AIN'T GOT NONE!

DANZ WARZ

dennis sebastian / hendrick gonzales
www.danzwarz.blogspot.com



BRAVE TRIUMPHANT FEARLESS

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE HEROES
UNFORTUNATELY ZY THE BLUNDERING
VILLAIN HUNTER AND HIS
LOOSE-BLADDERS COMPANION IRIS
ARE NONE OF THE ABOVE.


PRESENTING

ZYCLOPS

WWW.ZYCLOPSCARTOON.COM
INFO@ZYCLOPSCARTOON.COM
TELEPHONE: 703-926-2292

SHE'S SO SOLAR & EVERYTHING'S GREEN
WHEN SHE SHOOT, LOVE FILLS THE SCENE


TEXAS SHOOTER



SHE INHERITED HER MENTOR'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIO
BUT LITTLE DID SHE KNOW SHE ALSO INHERITED
THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY &
TECHNICALLY ADVANCED SECRET SOCIETY D.O.T.A.
-DEFENDERS OF THE ARTS!

KELLY@KELLYCATCHINGS.com

ARCHIE MCAFEE - AM3210@HOTMAIL.COM
626 676 5601



LEGEND OF THE TOYMASTER

IN A MEGA SIZED GALAXY WITH TRILLIONS,
NO ZILLIONS OF ALIEN TOYS YOU NEED
A TOY MASTER, SO LET THE LEGEND BEGIN.

ACTION ADVENTURE FEATURE

AQUA CAT

Instant hero, just add water!



A fluffy, lazy housecat by day.
By night - this sleek
feline fills with fury to battle
the world of diabolical,
extreme pets. Meet Aqua Cat!

edtoon@shaw.ca
877-866-6464

COMPUTERKIDZ


LIMITED BY YOUR IMAGINATION

THE ADVENTURES OF
CHILDREN CATAPULTED INTO
THE COMPUTER THROUGH A
TIME TUNNEL!

FROM MEETING MERLIN
TO SAVING THE WORLD,
THERE'S NOTHING
THEY CAN'T DO
AND NO TIME THEY
CAN'T EXPLORE!



CONTACT MIKE DOLAN
email: dolan28@aol.com



EVIL GENIUS ACADEMY

Are you evil enough?

The most dangerous student at the
Evil Genius Academy is having trouble
passing any exam. But the biggest
danger he presents is to himself.

Evil Genius Academy, the reason
superheroes are safe in the hands of
villians. FAILURE is genius!

ENROL NOW!
lee@evilgeniusacademy.com

A STORK WORLD

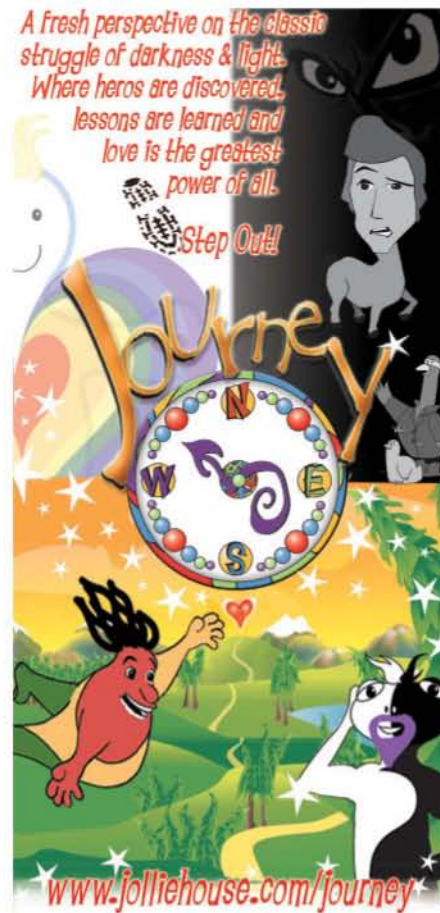
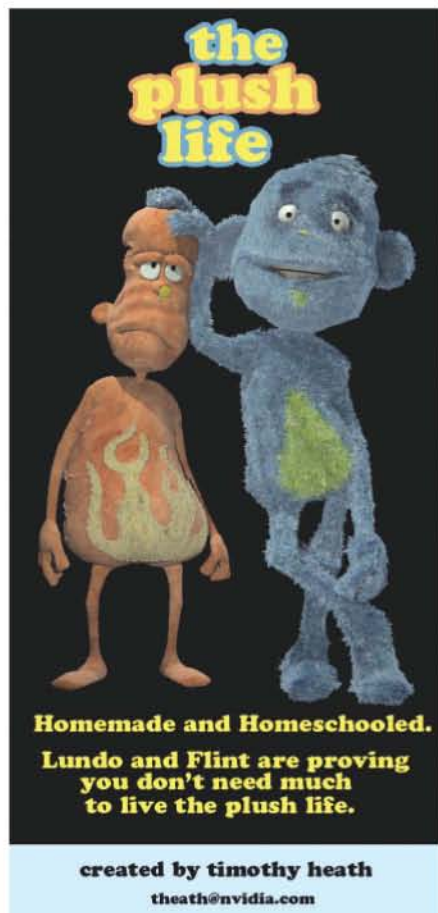
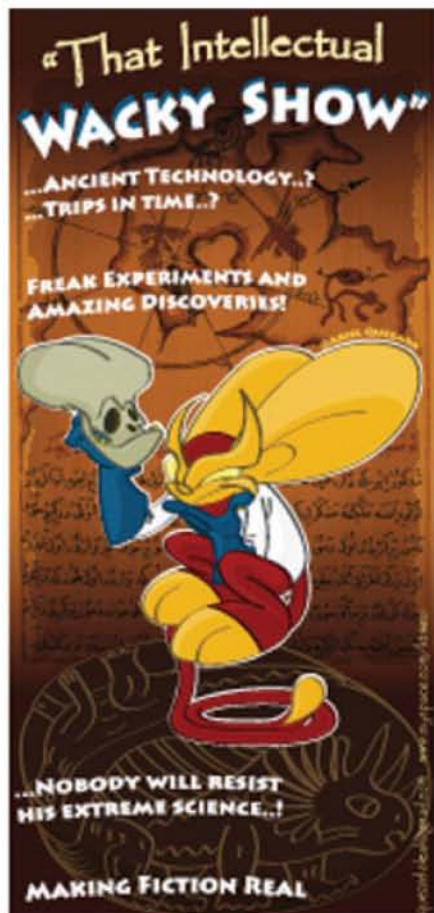
When baby animals are in big trouble,
The rescue storks are on the double!

7 Storks
7 Continents
7 Days a Week

Let the deliveries begin!



Deliveries scheduled by Jennifer: storkworld@gmail.com



VANarts®

Vancouver Institute of Media Arts



1 YEAR DIPLOMA PROGRAMS

STARTING:

SEPTEMBER '08 + MARCH '09

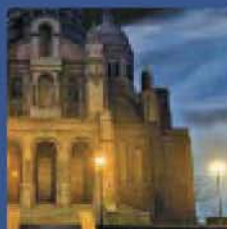
SMALL CLASS SIZES

PERSONAL WORKSTATIONS

STRONG INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

REGULAR TELECASTS WITH PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS

visit vanarts.com for more details





Peque's Patchwork Life

Director Peque Varela stitches a visual memory quilt in her award-winning short, 1977. *by Mercedes Milligan*

In a year which has born witness to an historic Democratic Primary race, the legalization of same-sex marriage in California and a female-to-male transsexual's pregnancy, U.K. based National Film & Television School grad Peque Varela's inventive short film about social stereotypes and their effects on her life—and by extension all our lives—arrived on the scene with perfect timing.

1977 debuted earlier this year at Sundance, creating a buzz which has snowballed as it traveled the festival circuit. Most recently, Varela's graduate film took the Best Student Film Award at the Stuttgart Festival of Animated Film in Germany. While she was happy—and surprised!—to receive the Award, Varela is noticeably proud to mention that the film has been "a complete success" in her home of Galicia, Spain; the setting for the artfully jumbled scenes from her life that make up her film.

"I wanted to explore the contradictory feelings I had growing up as a tomboy; breaking social stereotypes in a heterosexual, Catholic society in a small town," Varela explains, "How one has to sometimes unravel a knot in order to find her identity—a knot created by the social pressure to conform." This feeling of constriction is translated in a free-form assemblage of image, sound and technique which is at once disorienting and explanatory. Varela

wanted to break filmic traditions as well as stereotypes: "There was no script or storyboard, the goal was to shape a collection of memories into a coherent film," she says, "I wanted to tell this story in an imaginative way; similar to the way I remembered those moments, mixed in my blurred memories."

Varela and her team took advantage of 1977's rule-breaking concept as an opportunity to play with many mediums and techniques. She says the most fun they had was working out creative ways to represent each moment, finding the best method for each. Varela's media background is evident in the blending of still photography, green screen and pixelation with cut-out, rotoscoped and hand-drawn animation (cobbed together with After Effects). "Although animation is perceived as a medium where improvisation is very limited because of rigid and orthodox production rules," she says (citing the medium's usual assembly-line production order), "I believe that by breaking it one can work in a more inventive and intuitive way." The disjointed production method made creating a coherent final piece challenging, but all the more rewarding.

It's hard to imagine that the winner of such a respected prize in the animation world has only become involved in it relatively recently. As a child, Varela was never far from the

family's camcorder, and originally came to London to study media and filmmaking at the University of Westminster. The experience showed her that her ideas



Peque Varela

could be better expressed outside the restrictions of live-action film. "I had always been interested in moving images; doodling was my hobby," she explains, "I decided to combine both passions and animation opened up as an almost infinite world of possibilities." Since that revelation she has completed several student shorts at NFTS as well as work for MTV, and blossomed under the mentorship of award-winning indie animator Phil Mulloy (*Intolerance I and II*, *Love Is Strange*). "[His] feedback was extremely useful and refreshing. In a way, it showed me that one can actually do independent animations and not have to succumb to commercial pressure," Varela muses.

While many artists would be content to revel in success for a while after such an intensive project, Varela is firing on all cylinders and firmly focused on the future: "I'm now developing a feature animation to be done in Galicia, Spain—we are at the very early stages, so we'll see where we get to. I'm also working as a freelance animator for advertisement and film companies, as well as developing a personal short film revolving around the issue of immigration." She hopes that 1977's warm reception will buoy the success of her planned feature, and that she'll be able to continue making independent shorts in, as she puts it, the "unique and rich language" of animation. ■



For more information, visit the Stuttgart Festival site, www.iffs.de, or the Nat'l Film and Television School at www.nftsanimation.org.



Road Rash

Bix Pix and Sony's C-Spot put comedy in high gear with the *Roadents*. **by Ryan Ball**

Two hamsters in a 1983 Winnebago struggle to survive a road trip and one another in *Roadents*, a new short-form animated web series from toon studio Bix Pix Ent. and Sony Pictures Television. Bix Pix has produced a total of 13 episodes, which are available on The C-Spot, Sony's own Internet channel devoted to comedy. The show has been very well received by the online community and another 13 episodes are in the works.

Roadents is created, produced and animated by Bix Pix's Justin Hilden, who co-directs the episodes with Bix Pix principal Kristofer Updike. Stylistically, the project marks a subtle departure for Bix Pix, which is best known for stop-motion productions such as the 2006 holiday special *Holidaze: The Christmas That Almost Didn't Happen*.

"I wanted to make a show that took stop-motion and made it faster because it was a smaller idea and I didn't think it needed a full stop-motion build and crew," Hilden tells us. "I thought it could be done kind of quick and dirty."

Keeping *Roadents* simple allows the team to create an entire episode in about five days. Most of the time there are only two characters and one background to deal with, and there aren't any elaborate action sequences. There isn't even a script, per se, only the improvised exchanges between seasoned improv

actors David Harris as Buttercup and Kevin McShane as Pee Pee.

For each installment, Harris and McShane are given a basic concept and are turned loose to explore the comic possibilities. Updike, who has a background in improv, then takes the audio sessions and selects the best lines to cobble together and create a cohesive storyline. That "script" is then sent to Sony for approval before Hilden starts the process of creating a Toon Boom animatic, which must also be approved by the distributor.

Hilden built Buttercup and Pee Pee as stop-motion puppets using real fur and simple aluminum-wire armatures, then photographed them from all angles. The snapshots were then imported into the computer and made into virtual stop-motion characters to be animated in After Effects

with eyes and mouths. The new version of After Effects includes the Puppet tool, which allows him to squash and stretch the characters as needed. Certain elements, such as a road map that Pee Pee has trouble refolding, are animated in stop-mo.

"I had to build an

Driving with Pee Pee and Buttercup: Bix Pix created the 13-part web series *Roadents* for Sony's C-Spot.



animation system and make it work, but once I got that done it worked surprisingly well for us," Hilden remarks. "I learned a lot from doing this season and I think it will work for future Bix Pix projects."

"We look at it as a hybrid of 2D and 3D," Updike adds. "We've done a couple projects that way recently and it's fun."

Hilden used Magpie to read the tracks, then developed a customized lip-sync system in After Effects with a series of on/off switches to select the right mouth at the right time. There are automated lip-sync solutions on the market, but Hilden says it was important to do it manually, frame-by-frame. "The show is really about what these guys are saying and their personalities, so I thought we really needed to get the mouths and facial animation really clean and good."

Sony Pictures Television got involved with the project when the Bix Pix team went to pitch another concept and mentioned that they also had this funny web series in the works. The studio brass really liked the concept and decided to add it to their growing lineup of multi-platform properties. The unit also handles Electric Farm Ent.'s CG-animated sci-fi series *Afterworld*, which can be seen on MySpace.com and various other outlets.

"Sony has been amazing," Updike remarks. "I feel like I should have something negative to say, but Michael Ross is quite brilliant and really trusts his people to come up with stuff. If they had a note, we would logically discuss it and it was a nice conversation. It's a very unusual situation."

Bix Pix recently completed a music video for an international pop star they couldn't name, and are also mounting a stop-motion television show and two feature films, one stop-mo and one live action.

Roadents is exec produced by Bix Pix Ent. founder Kelli Bixler and edited by Shea Formanek, who also records all the sound effects. Head over to The C-Spot on Sony's Crackle.com, YouTube.com, Hulu.com and other sites to watch all 13 episodes of the first season of *Roadents* and the first installments of the second season, which kicked off in June. ■



Superheroic Heights

Will the love affair between Marvel and DC characters and animation reach new heights next year?

by Thomas J. McLean

Comic books have never been hotter in Hollywood, with comic-based movies dominating the box office and feature film deals announced seemingly every day for even the most obscure titles.

And while scads of animation projects will be trumpeted at the annual fan scrum known as Comic-Con International, Marvel and DC are surprisingly just about the only players in town when it comes to getting actual comics turned into animation.

Now, just as they've been rivals for the attention of comic-book readers, DC and Marvel are using animation to bolster their brands and go after an audience increasingly divided into longtime, older fans and brand-new, very young fans.

Both companies have found perhaps unexpected success in reaching older fans with direct-to-DVD feature films.

Marvel was first out of the gate with its *Ultimate Avengers* feature in 2006, followed by *Ultimate Avengers 2*, *Iron Man* and *Doctor Strange*. But DC came on strong last year by adapting its most popular comic-book franchises into animated fea-

tures, with *Superman: Doomsday* and especially *Justice League: The New Frontier* finding critical acclaim and commercial success.

Gregory Noveck, VP of creative affairs for DC Comics, says the animated features were the result of



both parent company Warner Bros.' aspirations to expand its animation audience beyond the kids' market and fans' desire to see favorite stories brought to life.

"As much as possible, we're trying to stick to storylines that have either appeared in the comic or be really inspired by stories that have appeared in the

comics as opposed to coming up with stuff totally from scratch," he says. "It extends the brand, it helps with the marketing and it gives the fans exactly what they want."



Eric Rollman

Fan support also lets the features try out different styles of animation, which has remained somewhat static since *Batman: The Animated Series* set the standard for



Gregory Noveck

superhero animation in the 1990s. *Batman: Gotham Knight*, the current DC-based DVD feature, intentionally deviates from that model, teaming up fan-favorite Batman comic-book writers with top Japanese animators to create an *Animatrix*-style anthology. "It shows the fans of DC that we respect them and take them seriously and that, in this case, the inmates are kind of running the asylum," Noveck says.

Marvel's feature efforts have been less about adapting specific comic-book stories than incubating ideas and trying new things that can't be done in TV animation or as a live-action film. Eric Rollman, president of Marvel Animation, cites the company's most recent DVD release, *Doctor Strange*, as an example. "It was not our biggest selling film, but it was probably the best story and the best visual story we've made to date," he says.

Fans definitely shape the content of the features. Noveck says he polls fans at conventions to find out which characters and which storylines they want to see adapted. Up next is *Wonder Woman*, which will be a re-imagining of her origin story that borrows elements from popular comic books by George Perez and Greg Rucka. Current *Wonder Woman* comic writer Gail Simone wrote a draft of the script, and Noveck says the project will be teased at Comic-Con if any footage is ready in time for the show.

Future projects will likely alternate between fan favorite material and the most popular DC characters. "We have

to give fans stuff beyond just Batman and Superman, and we'll definitely do that," says Noveck. Future projects likely will include Green Lantern, who's proven more popular with fans than a planned adaptation of the classic Teen Titans story *The Judas Contract*.

"If I've got 20 fans saying they want *Green Lantern* and three saying they want *Teen Titans*, it's hard to sort of say, 'OK, it's *Teen Titans*,'" he says.

While Marvel's features have all been in PG-13 territory, the company is going younger and broader with *Next Avengers*, which features the classic heroes' children. While the features and TV have been separate initiatives, Rollman says if the feature is a success it could lead to a regular series.

"We never really thought of it that way in the past, mainly because we've been producing those for an older demographic, for our fanboys," Rollman says. "If we can go broader and the *Next Avengers* proves to be successful, then maybe we have a model that works."

Marvel also will swing toward the DC model, planning to adapt its *Planet Hulk* comic-book story into a DVD for 2010.

Marvel and DC aren't alone in trying



The Spectacular Spider-Man



Batman: Gotham Knight



Bold debuts this year starring a more kid-friendly version of Batman teaming up with a different DC hero each episode. It also allows for some experimentation with the character, who has been open to a tremendous number of interpretations in the comics, from silly to grim and

gritty.

"Since *Batman: The Animated Series* and *The Batman* were playing in the same ballpark, we didn't want to do the same thing yet again," Noveck says. "There is that other side of Batman, where he's actually kind of great straight man."

Both Marvel and DC see Comic-Con as an essential marketing stop for their animated product. It's a place where they can reward the fans who've supported them for so long and they have a built in advantage with fans when it comes to standing out from the crowd of animated panels and screening.

But even with so much animated superhero material coming out, neither Noveck nor Rollman is worried about a glut as long as the quality is high. "I think it's hard to overdose on that when you just have two repositories of [superhero] properties," says Noveck.

"It's a very important market for us to be able to, I think, give back to our loyal fan base," says Rollman. "That's the one place where we can really showcase things in a somewhat intimate environment, if you can call it that." ■

Tom Mclean writes regularly about comic books, animation and visual effects for *Animation Magazine*. You can also read his popular comic-book blog at http://we-blogs.variety.com/bags_and_boards.

Spider-Man series on The CW4Kids and also debut four new series: *Iron Man: Armored Adventures*, *Wolverine and the X-Men*, a *Hulk* series and *Super Hero Squad*.

Additionally, Marvel has a more adult-oriented *Black Panther* series set to air on BET. The eight-episode series will adapt the comics written by the network's president of entertainment Reggie Hudlin and feature a "very high-end interpretation of the artwork for the comics," Roll-

"*Doctor Strange* was not our biggest selling film, but it was probably the best story and the best visual story we've made to date."

—Eric Rollman, president of Marvel Animation



to crack the direct to DVD market. Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*, published by Dark Horse and returning to the big screen this summer, starred in a pair of direct-to-DVD animated toons, but Mignola has said that plans for a third feature were put on hold due to sales not meeting expectations. Other comics houses like Virgin Comics are planning animation adaptations, but in Virgin's case it's primarily targeting the India market rather than U.S. fanboys.

In TV animation, Marvel is poised to make a huge impact. In 2009, the company will be continuing its *Spectacular*

man says.

The approaches vary on all these series, with *Iron Man: Armored Adventures* telling tales of teenage Tony Stark in high school while *Wolverine and the X-Men* gets back to basics and *Super Hero Squad* goes very broad with young, cartoony versions of the Marvel characters that Rollman says he expects to be a sleeper hit.

DC's TV outings also are going younger. "It's a younger audience," Noveck says.

Legion of Super-Heroes continues with its third season, while *The Brave and the*



B. Brown © SDCC

The Con Is On!

If you're reading this magazine, we don't have to remind you that the annual geekfest/bacchanal known as Comic-Con is happening in San Diego July 24-27. Before you fall under the spell of this all-encompassing, ever-growing confab, make sure you put the following eight items on your to-do list or risk being forever haunted by the unfulfilled ghosts of Comic-Cons past.

1. As always, Cartoon Network will be bringing many of its superstars to the event. On tap this year: A Friday panel on the new series **Batman: The Brave and the Bold**; a special **Powerpuff Girls/Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends** featuring creator Craig McCracken and voice talent Tom Kenny, Keith Ferguson and Elizabeth Daily; a terrific [adult swim] panel focusing on **Robot Chicken** (with co-creators Seth Green and Matt Senreich) and **The Venture Bros.** with creator Jackson Publick; a **Ben 10: Alien Force** panel with exec producer Glen Murakami and the voice cast; and a sneak peek of **Secret Saturdays** with creator Jay Stephens. Also on tap: panels on **Chowder**, **The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack** and a preview of Maxwell Atoms' hot new series **Underfist**.



2. What would Saturday night be without the annual **Masquerade** event? It's time to put on your best Naruto/Cylon/Jedi/Iron-Man/Wonder Woman outfit and join 1,500-plus other creative costume-wearers at one of the most theatrical competitions of the year. Masters of ceremonies Phil and Kaija Foglio will entertain the masses. Among the numerous gifts for the best costumes in various categories: Limited edition collectibles from LucasFilm and new Halo 3 Xbox console signed by the studio team and a full-size Master Chief costume, high-end laser-tag weapons and figurines. OMG! We're getting goose-bumps just thinking about it.
3. There are plenty of milestones to be celebrated at this year's event: It's the 75th anniversary of the **American Comic Book** (*Funnies on Parade*), 75th anniversary of **Doc Savage**, the 75th anniversary of the original **King Kong**, the 50th anniversary of **Famous Monsters of Filmland** and the 50th year of the **Legion of Super-Heroes**. It's true: Certain things do get better with age!
4. Yes, we know. A big part of the appeal of Comic-Con is to be the first one in your neighborhood to get a glimpse of a highly anticipated movie! Well, this year, you will be able to feast your eyes on the upcoming adaptation of Frank Miller's **The Spirit**, J. J. Abrams' 2009 **Star Trek** movie and, of course, the new animated Warner Bros. toon **Wonder Woman**.



5. What would life be without those awesome collectibles that you can only buy at Comic-Con? Get ready to part with your hard-earned dollars as you take home the new **Iron Man Helm** from Sideshow Collectibles and Marvel (\$39.99), **Heroes Sylar Action Figure** (\$30) or a **Funco Charlie Brown Vintage Bobblehead** (\$15). We love it. We love it. We want more of it!



6. If you are wise and you are able to register as a four-day member, you can check out the massive Exhibit Hall before the arrival of all the unwashed masses on **Preview Night** (that's Wednesday, July 23).

7. Some of our all-time favorite comic-book, fantasy and animation heroes will be roaming the San Diego Convention Center halls this year. Among this year's amazing roster of special guests: Mayor of Horrorwood, **Forrest J. Ackerman**, Mad Magazine genius **Sergio Aragones**, animation rebel **Ralph Bakshi** (Fritz the Cat, Heavy Traffic), acclaimed cartoonist **Lynda Barry** (*The Good Times Are Killing Me*), sci-fi writer legend **Ray Bradbury**, author **Max Brooks** (*The Zombie Survival Guide*), comic-book writer **Ed Brubaker** (*Gotham Central*), cartoonist **Kim Deitch** (*Boulevard of Broken Dreams*), comic-book writer and animation blogger **Mark Evanier**, Mad Magazine Fold-In mastermind, **Al Jaffee**, horror writer **Dean Koontz**, cartoonist **Rutu Modan** (*Exit Wounds*), actress **Noel Neill** (the original Lois Lane in *Superman*), renowned animator **Floyd Norman**, artist **Steve Purcell** (creator of *Sam & Max*), writer-artist **Jim Starlin** (DC Comics' *The Death of the New Gods*), comic-book writer and film director **J. Michael Straczynski** (*Ninja Assassins*, *The Changeling*, *Thor*), graphic novelist **Adrian Tomine** (*Shortcomings*) and cartoonist **Jim Woodring** (*Jim and Frank*).



Fritz the Cat



The Good Times Are Killing Me

8. Visit **Animation Magazine's** booth to get your hands on all kinds of cool freebies and toon-related giveaways!

Don't forget to visit www.comic-con.org to find out about all the last-minute event updates, additions and cancellations!

The 1st ACM SIGGRAPH Conference and Exhibition in Asia

CONFERENCE 10-13 DECEMBER 2008 EXHIBITION 11-13 DECEMBER 2008

COMING SOON. SIGGRAPH ASIA PREMIERES IN SINGAPORE IN DECEMBER 2008!

Be there and become part of the world's fastest growing digital-media region.

EXHIBITION

Reserve your exhibit space now for this year's best opportunity in Asia to reconnect with customers, meet new buyers, recruit talent, and network with all the leading experts who are growing Asia's vibrant computer graphics community.

CONFERENCE

Experience the highest quality, multi-sensory computer graphics and interactive techniques presented by leading industry luminaries from around the world in a variety of SIGGRAPH programs:

Art Gallery
Computer Animation Festival
Courses
Educators Programme

Emerging Technologies
Sketches & Posters
Technical Papers

Online registration
starts from 14th July

www.siggraph.org/asia2008

For more information:
SIGGRAPH Asia 2008
Koelnmesse Pte Ltd
+65.6500.6700
+65.6296.2771 fax
asia2008@siggraph.org



SIGGRAPHASIA2008
NEW HORIZONS

HELD IN:

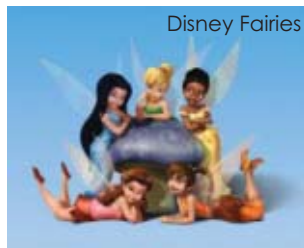
UNIQUELY
Singapore
visitsingapore.com

Objects of Desire

Brief news bytes from the world of toon-related toys.
by Ramin Zahed

Disney Consumer Sets New Record

The Mouse House loves its toys. It was announced recently that retail sales of licensed Disney merchandise exceeded \$30 billion globally, a record for the studio. According to **Disney Consumer Products'** Andy Mooney, retail sales of Disney products have doubled thanks to brands such as *High School Musical*, *Disney Princess* and expanding franchises such as *Disney/Pixar's Cars* and *Disney Fairies*. The \$5 billion girl franchises (*Fairies* and *Princess*) will continue to grow thanks to new DVD releases such as a Platinum DVD release of *Sleeping Beauty* and the CG-animated *Tinker Bell* movie this fall and upcoming features such as *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) and *Rapunzel* (2010). Preschool shows such as *Little Einsteins*, *Handy Manny*, *My Friends Tigger & Pooh* and *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* will continue to keep the characters alive for preschoolers and their parents. Not surprisingly, Disney Consumer Products walked away with several of the LIMA International Licensing Excellence Awards at the Licensing Show in New York with *High School Musical 2* nabbing the award for Best Overall License of the year.



Disney Fairies

Much Ado About Casper's Big 6-0!

Although **Casper the Friendly Ghost** was first created by Joe Oriolo and Sy Reit in the late 1930s, and the first Casper animated short premiered in 1946, the folks at Classic Media are celebrating the character's 60th anniversary in 2009—perhaps because the first Casper comic book appeared in 1949.

We'll be seeing numerous new Casper-branded products—DVDs, music, digital content, games and social expression next year. Get ready for Casper cards, gift wrap and Halloween accessories from American Greetings; stickers, temporary



tattoos and wall décor from Mello Smello, new DVD collections from Genius Products, and new online initiatives on YouTube, Joost and Babelgum.

What would a 60th birthday be without a spanking new CG-animated series? The new *Casper* TV toon, produced by Classic Media, Moonscoop and DQ Entertainment is

slated to debut in 60 territories around the world including TF1 (France), Cartoon Network (the U.K., Asia, Latin America), YTV (Canada) and Jetix (Europe). It's all proof that being friendly even pays off in the land of the dead.

Wonder Woman, Fashionista?

If you thought **Wonder Woman** was a Target kind of gal, you'd be wrong! **Warner Bros. Consumer Products** announced last month that fashion icon **Diane von Furstenberg** is launching a Wonder Woman-inspired collection in October. The limited-edition collection will include ready-to-wear, small leather goods and footwear inspired by the motifs and symbols of the DC Comics super heroine. Proceeds from select pieces will be contributed to Vital Voices Global Partnership, a non-governmental organization that trains and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs. We have a feeling the character's creator—the polyamorous Dr. William Moulton Marston (1893-1947)—is laughing about this somewhere beyond the grave.



Warm and Woolly Toys

HIT Entertainment has been tapped to represent consumer products rights for **Aardman**

Animations' new preschool series **Timmy Time** in the U.S. HIT, a part-owner of U.S.-based preschool

channel, PBS KIDS Sprout and international preschool channel

JimJam, will also manage Aardman's

themed attraction business

worldwide for *Wallace & Gromit*, *Shaun the Sheep* and *Timmy Time*.

Timmy Time is Aardman

Animations' first animated television

series for preschoolers, and is slated to begin airing on Playhouse Disney in the

U.S. and Disney Channels around the world

starting in early 2009. As representative for this property, HIT will look to launch *Timmy* consumer products in all key categories, including home entertainment, toys, games, publishing, apparel, accessories and more. *Timmy* will be in good company at HIT as the company's rich portfolio also includes *Barney*, *Bob the Builder*, *Thomas & Friends*, *Wallace & Gromit*, *Shaun the Sheep* and Aardman Classics. For more information, visit www.hitentertainment.com.



Factoids to Impress Your Friends With:

- The average retail price of a licensed toy is 48% higher than that of a non-licensed toy (\$10.25 versus \$6.92).
- Licensed toys comprise 27% of total toy industry dollar sales.
- Retail sales of licensed merchandise worldwide hit \$106.7 billion in 2007.

10 Items or Less

Here are 10 cool collectibles we spotted on our fave toy website Entertainmentearth.com recently:

- Leonardo Da Vinci Action Figure (Am. Science, \$11.99)
- Batman: The Dark Knight Action Cape Figure (Mattel, \$27.99)
- Hellboy 2 Action Figure (Mezco, \$17.99)
- LEGO 7624 Indiana Jones Jungle Duel (LEGO, \$9.99)
- Barak Obama Talking Bobble Head (Funco, \$9.99)
- Iron Man Movie Fine Art Statue (Tokobukiya, \$179.99)
- Dexter 7-Inch Action Figure (Bif, Bang, Pow! \$15.99)
- Nightmare Before Christmas Tiffany Lamp (Necca, \$59.99)
- Futurama Gender Bender Tin Toy (Rocket USA, \$29.99)
- Battlestar Galactica Action Figure Case 1 (Diamond, \$127.99)



Fluffy Gardens Grows Around the World

Floella the Fruitbat, Paolo the Cat and Wee Reg the Puppy aren't household names yet. However, the stars of **Target Entertainment's** new 2D-animated series **Fluffy Gardens** are getting ready for global domination as new licensing partners and broadcasters sign on. Created, written and



directed by Jason Tammemägi (Monster Animation & Design), the preschool show centers on an eccentric group of animals. Asiana will work closely with broadcaster EBS to launch the show's licensing programs in Korea. The series is set to air on France 5, ABC Australia, Norway's NRK, SVT in Sweden, M-Net's kids channel KTV, Cineplex in Thailand, RTV Slovenia and Discovery Kids Latin America. CPL (Compania Panamericana de Licencias) will manage all Latin American territories, with the exception of Argentina and Brazil, which will be handled by PRO Entertainment.

More Carrots for Bugs

File this under ironic chapters in cartoon history. Our favorite icons of risky behavior in life—Bugs Bunny, Taz, Wile E. Coyote, Daffy Duck and the rest of the **Looney Tunes** gang—will be promoting "active, better-for-you lifestyles" thanks to a new **Warner Bros. Consumer Products** venture. Yes, it looks like our falling-anvil-defying toons will be appearing on breakfast foods, portable meals, dairy, snacks and beverages sold at **Safeway Stores** around the country. The Eating Rights Kids initiative is one of the first product lines to broadly feature entertainment characters and be dedicated solely to a healthier eating philosophy. Meanwhile, the famous animated characters are part of a four- to 10-year-old active lifestyle marketing plan called Looney Tunes Active! in Europe, Middle East and Africa. It's easier to see the connection when you think about all the chasing around involved in most Looney Tunes adventures!



Nick Hatches Plans for New Neopets Goods

Nickelodeon & Viacom Consumer Products unveiled at Licensing Expo 2008 plans for a new line of **Neopets** toys and merchandise due to hit stores this fall. The new products follow up on the success of the Neopets plush line, which debuted in February. They include more plush, toys, trading cards, figures, puzzles, playsets, books, stationery, apparel and videogames and all will take part in a "360" product to web experience: Consumers are directed to the web community at www.neopets.com, where they can redeem virtual tokens or virtual items for their Neopets. Licensing partners include Capcom, Jakks Pacific, Harper-Collins, Enterplay and Mamiye Brothers. Items will be available at Target, Wal-Mart, Toys R Us, Claire's and Kmart.



Neopets were launched as a virtual pet website by Adam Powell and Donna Williams in 1999. Warner Bros. is preparing a CG-animated Neopets movie (**The Lost Tomb: A Neopets Adventure**), based on a screenplay by Rob Lieber and directed by Henry Anderson, with CG animation provided by Animal Logic (*Happy Feet*). The film is slated for an April 2009 release.

A WALL•E World

We hear the folks at Disney Consumer are breathing a sigh of relief this summer as they have a very toy-friendly CG-animated star to pitch in **WALL•E** (which is worlds apart from 2007's friendly rat in the kitchen, Remy from *Ratatouille*). When we last checked our favorite stores, there were too many amazing tie-in toys to pick from. Do we pick up the Think Way's deluxe Toy Interaction WALL•E (\$45.90), the three-inch poseable mini figure EVE (\$14.95), or the complete Action Figure Set (\$29.99). How about the WALL•E eye mask, ceiling dangles, napkins, stickers, temporary tattoos, streamers, confetti, thank-you cards and disc-launchers? Not to mention Tim Hauser's beautiful *Art of WALL•E* book (Chronicle Books, \$40). Oh, fudgetabout it—we're probably going to pretend there's no recession and buy all of them as very early Christmas gifts for ourselves. We just won't drive our cars all summer. ■



Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



Autodesk 3ds Max 2009

I'm not sure when Autodesk is ever going to pull the trigger and just marry Maya and Max together; probably because the marriage is going to end up in death and violence like the Montagues and Capulets, with some felled animator crying out, "A plague on both your houses!" But all you need to do is look at the latest interfaces of the different tools and you can see that the writing is on the wall. However, this is a specific review of 3ds Max 2009, so I'll just stick to the business at hand.

When you first open the new release, you get the ViewCube located in the corner of each window to quickly rotate the cube into standard configurations. I like it—it's very handy. You also get the Steering Wheel. I'm not such a fan of this feature: It looks like a Ouija planchette and kind of gets in the way of productivity and doesn't allow me to speak with spirits from beyond, so I turned it off. However, a really cool viewport feature is History, where viewport positions are saved and you can recall them quickly and easily. As a side note, the ViewCube is also in Maya 2008.

New materials and mapping features have also been provided. Spline mapping was added for those tough-to-map objects such as twisting branches or tentacles that weren't modeled in a straight line. The pelt mapping was revamped in the UnwrapUVW node—anything that helps with UVMapping is something that I support. Plus a composite map and color correction map, emulating controls from Combustion and Toxic, were put in which makes making complex shaders so much easier. (I think Autodesk should stick this feature into Maya instead of focusing on the Ouija technology!) In addition, many new advances have been put into incorporating mental ray into the rendering system including pre-render of photon maps and Final Gather maps, BSP2 acceleration and geometry caching for extremely heavy geometry used in multiple scenes, alleviating mental ray from having to calculate the translation for each frame of each scene. This means heavy-



duty savings, my friends.

Other enhancements are in the Scene and Project Management arenas. The Scene Explorer has been updated with advanced filtering. I kind of liked the old way, so I'm not too excited about this development. If they just created a hybrid of that and the Maya outliner, I could pass away a happy man. Autodesk has also created interoperability with its newly adopted child, Mudbox. So, Max and Mudbox can generally play in the sandbox together and make beautiful sandcastles because they speak the same OBJ file export language, which has become a little more robust with more options.

Overall, they are offering lots of nice improvements with the '09 version. I still prefer Max over the other 3D programs, but this has a lot to do with my own tastes. It's similar to how I feel about Kraft Mac & Cheese—I don't like it because it's necessarily the best, but because I grew up on it. I'm sure there are lots of other ways to make pasta with cheese, and they're all just as good!

Website: www.autodesk.com

Price: \$3,999

Alienware Area-51 m15x

I've been reading that the new Alienware Area-51 m15x is a gaming machine. Sure, it's great at games, pushing through high polycount mayhem at 1920 x 1040 and allowing for death and destruction to occur with high-res blood maps and Z depth fog. This is surely a lot of fun, but I'm not a gamer, despite my humble beginnings as a six-year *Combat!* player on the Atari 2600. I'm not going to pay \$4,000-5,000 for a laptop so that my refresh rate is faster than my opponent's. I invest so that my investment will pay me back—am I right, fellow animators? Our tools have to give us what we need to do our job, and this is why I am going to discuss the m15x.

It's sleek, shiny and compact. It may not be as physically robust as its predecessors, but I don't need a laptop that can brain a car-jacker. In fact, I would let the jacker take the

car in lieu of the laptop—given my car. The keyboard is illuminated along with other buttonless features, giving off an eerie colored glow that can be customized through the Alienware Command Center. I like this feature because it comes in really handy when you are sitting in a darkened theater taking notes during dailies.

But, enough of the superficial niceties: The laptop's real power is in the CPU and the GPU. The NVIDIA GeForce 8800M GTX powers the graphics of this little gadget with 512MB of RAM on board. Supplemented with the Intel Core 2 Extreme X9000 2, 8Ghz CPU, it packs quite a punch. It managed any number of 3D programs, throwing tons of polys at the system, without a noticeable slowdown. I did, however, have to turn off Vista's pretty and delicate 3D/Transparent windows feature for 3ds Max 9—simply because 9 doesn't support Vista. (Not a big deal, but it gives me a chance to say how much I abhor Vista!)

The m15x sports up to a 500GB internal drive. You also have the option of getting a 64GB internal SSD (Solid State Drive) with no moving parts and more robust than standard drives. You might think that 64GB isn't enough—and you'd be right. So, you have a SmartBay in the side of the machine that you can swap out additional drives from 120GB to 500GB.

I could go on for a few more pages, but I'll wrap it up by saying that the m15x is a powerful enough machine for most applications and small enough that it's not intrusive in mobile work situations. Out of the box, it is priced at \$1,500, but you can jazz it up with supplements to bring it into the \$5,000 range. Yes, there is that much room to customize the system to your liking.

Website: www.alienware.com

Price: \$1,499 ■



Todd Sheridan Perry is the co-owner and vfx supervisor of Max Ink Productions. He can be reached at ducky@maxinkcafe.com.

Digital Magic

by Christopher Grove



A 2D Panda Kick-Off

Hitching your wagon to almost any DreamWorks project is a fortunate career move for any design house. So when creative design studio **Shine** got hooked up for the title sequence for the sequel-guaranteed **Kung Fu Panda**, so much the better.



With an atypical approach, Michael Riley, Shine's creative director, composed images of traditional Chinese landscapes, calligraphy and 2D character animation set in a 3D landscape all choreographed to the classic Carl Douglas song *Kung Fu Fighting* (remixed by Cee-Lo Green, accompanied by Jack Black). Riley's concept included reprising the film's main characters in original cel animations by finding them hidden in a gigantic Chinese calligraphy character. This mix of design and creative disciplines required a high level of collaboration between Shine, James Baxter Animation and the DreamWorks Animation team. "Working directly with the filmmakers was such a pleasure for us," says Riley. "Many of the people involved in making this movie have been a part of its creation for five years. Their insight into the characters was essential. The collaboration led to a more emotional and visually interesting sequence."

Meanwhile, many critics seem to be eating up their excellent work. Some have gone as far as saying they would've preferred the whole movie to have been similarly animated.

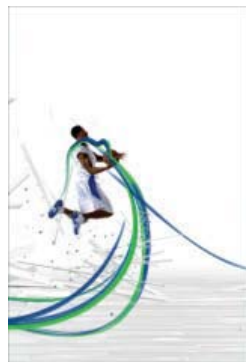
Webby Wrap

In the imitation is the best (and most useful) form of flattery department, check out the nominees (and website) for this year's **Webby Award** nominees and winners. With nearly 70 categories, the Website entries

make up the majority of Webby Awards contenders. Whether you simply appreciate great web design (or design in general) or are looking for ideas for your own web site, this is the place to start. Among this year's Webby honorees: Webby Lifetime Achievement: David Byrne, Webby Artist of the Year: will.i.am, Webby Person of the Year: Stephen Colbert, Webby Film & Video Lifetime Achievement: Lorne Michaels, Webby Film & Video Awards Person of the Year: Michel Gondry and the Webby Film & Video Awards Best Actor: Tim and Eric of [adult swim] fame. For a more interactive experience viewing this year's winners and nominees, you can explore the Webby Winner's Gallery at webbyawards.com/webbys/current.php?season=12

Wachovia Banks on Image Spots

As much as I dislike the ubiquity of advertising these days (airline tray tables, the inside of elevators, eggs, etc.), for some reason I don't mind the high-def, large screen advertising one sees on the Sunset Strip, Times Square and other major outdoor venues. There's some really good stuff, for example, currently on view at L.A. Live, the new entertainment district in downtown Los Angeles. Among the programming you'll see: A new six-spot image campaign for Wachovia, directed and designed by New York design/production house **Loyalkaspar** via Winston-Salem-based ad agency **Mullen**. The campaign can currently be seen on kiosks, HD monitors, JumboTrons and various multimedia billboards throughout the new \$2.5 billion pedestrian-



friendly area. The project was originally intended to be a single, long-form video, but early on that changed to six short spots.

"Creating six original spots to inextricably link

Wachovia to L.A. Live was a formidable undertaking," says David Herbruck, director and co-founder of Loyalkaspar. "We ultimately decided that the shorter spots could be more focused on the district's events. It made things more complex and challenging, but we kind of like it that way." In each of the spots, a hero character brings the logo and its creative energy to life. "Though they are obviously similar in branding, we went to great lengths to give each spot its own unique personality by coming up with a new look and methodology for the animated 'pulse lines.' This was definitely a challenge, but working with the team at Mullen was an amazing experience."

Going Ballistic

For any digital artist who wants to learn from the best, **Digital Painting 2** is now available for order from Ballistic Publishing (www.ballisticpublishing.com/books/dartiste/digital_painting_2).

In the (surprise, surprise) heavily illustrated book, readers can learn digital painting techniques from four of the world's top digital artists—Daniel Dociu, Mélanie Delon, Don Seegmiller and Marta Dahling—and see the CG art that inspires them. The 208-page volume features 12 detailed tutorials and some inspirational artwork. The publisher promises that the book will give readers some great lessons as well as tips on handling Photoshop and Painter from the four artists renowned for their character, creature and environment painting.

As an added bonus, Seegmiller, Delon, Dociu and Dahling will provide a selection of their favorite Photoshop and Painter brushes for Ballistic customers who pre-order *Digital Painting 2*. This exclusive download features most of the brushes mentioned in each of the artists' tutorials allowing you to quickly use the brushes in your own artwork. ■

Chris Grove is a Los Angeles-based journalist and actor who specializes in visual effects, animation and new media. He can be reached at cwjg@earthlink.net.



Leading a Digital Army

Guillermo del Toro works closely with the animation leads to create *Hellboy II*'s fantastical world, packed with large set pieces featuring hundreds of digital creations.

by Ron Magid

In today's digital entertainment universe, the paradigm for directors, actors and animators working together to create synthetic characters remains haphazard. One possible template for future productions is that explored by director Guillermo del Toro on *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*.

"The same artists were involved from the inception, through pre-viz and executing the final animation, which provided real nice continuity throughout," says matte painter-turned-vfx supervisor Mike Wassel (*The Time Machine*, *The Chronicles of Riddick*). "Unfortunately, it's not always practical. In this particular case, it was a bit difficult because of the spatial separation between Double Negative in London and where we were photographing the material in Budapest. I

would've much rather have had the pre-viz team based locally because it's difficult to communicate visually when you're a thousand miles away from your team. Instead, we set up a high-speed network pipeline so we could work remotely with the rest of the team in London."

Beyond maintaining continuity, del Toro relied on his animation leads—under Double Negative animation supervisor Eamonn Butler—to embody their characters, which allowed for an or-

ganic, improvisatory approach. As Wassel points out, "Guillermo worked directly with the animation leads for each digital character, which shortcut the process as he's communicating directly with his actors. There's very little chance for misinterpretation."

That was key, as *Hellboy II* was essentially a character animation nightmare, featuring large set pieces with sometimes dozens, even hundreds of digital creations, as well as key hero characters that were heavily, if not entirely, digital. Take the character of Johann Kraus (voiced by *Family Guy* creator Seth MacFarlane), who is essentially protoplasm contained within a humanoid suit. For most of the film, the character is portrayed by various actors in costume. "But there are times when he frees himself from his suit, which collapses, so the actor was replaced with a digital fluid simulation-based smoke effect," Wassel says. "Afterwards, we see him re-coalesce into a fairly undefined semi-human silhouette, then walk

off. Guillermo's not a fan of mo cap, so our fluid Sim team targeted the hand-animated walk cycle of Johann's silhouette for the simulation to inhabit."

In the Right Gear

Johann also helps Hellboy battle the Golden Army, 12-foot-tall robots made of hand-ham-



Monster House: *Hellboy II* showcases large set pieces with numerous digital characters and a cast of gruesome monsters, which echo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* creatures.



mered gold with an exo-skeletal gold ribcage revealing internal organs composed of red-hot clockwork mechanisms. "[Guillermo del Toro] definitely has a gear fetish," Wassel says. "Below the Golden Army chamber is this massive clockwork system—and this red-hot cog assembly, called the cog landscape, fires up the army and awakens them."

The Golden Army Chamber set filled a hockey stadium in Budapest—but the environment was virtually the only real component to the sequence. "The only things we had to rely on were full-size cutouts of the Golden Army warriors for camera reference that could be moved for framing purposes," Wassel says. "When Hellboy's leaping from one robot to another, we had these various green structures that we'd set up within the set itself, as in the sequence where he runs on top of a fallen soldier, cuts his head off, then jumps down onto the floor, beats up a couple of other guys and eventually stabs a guy in the chest."

Wassel recalls that the sequence was originally a single steadicam shot, where the operator followed Hellboy around as he delivered the action. "We built platforms that matched the height of a crushed Golden Army warrior's rib cage and had a series of guys in green suits that could either accept the resistance of a blow or take props from Hellboy in a series of hand-offs," he says. "To make the sequence more believable, GDT decided that the robot Hellboy's running up should still be moving. We set up a ramp representing the arm of the robot. Once Hellboy

runs onto the robot's chest, the ramp was pulled away so he could jump down into that same space, as if the robot's arm had moved. We played a number of those kind of spatial games to give audiences the sense that there's a real animated character there and not just a static set."

To create the illusion of physical con-



"The difference with character animation is that audiences know the giant green monster is not real, but the ideal is the same. We want to make it look photographically realistic."

—Mike Wassel, vfx supervisor, *Hellboy II*

tact between Hellboy and the CG warriors, Wassel used a number of different tricks to simulate resistance. After Johann breaks off one of the warrior's arms containing a retractable switchblade sword the size of the robot's forearm, he tosses it to Hellboy, who goes on a rampage. "He uses the sword to essentially beat the crap out of these guys," Wassel says. "Since the

sword, when fully deployed, is nine feet long, there was no way to build a prop light enough that Hellboy and the various stunt guys would be able to lift and which would've photographically matched the materials needed. Instead, we built a series of green practical stand-ins—depending on how dynamic his movements are, what he's got to do with the arm—then replaced them with a CG sword."

Interestingly, del Toro was intensely involved in the creature designs and the animation—but less so in the photography. "He left us hands off for the lighting design in the sequences," Wassel says.

Although he hasn't done many projects with character animation as the primary vfx, Wassel found his extensive matte painting background really came into play on *Hellboy II*: "The ideal of matte painting is to integrate your work completely invisibly to the audi-

ence, even when creating an environment that couldn't exist. The difference with character animation is that audiences know the giant green monster is not real, but the ideal is the same. We want to make it look photographically realistic." ■

Universal unleashes *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* in U.S. theaters on July 11.



Holy Redux, Batman!

The Dark Knight delivers a variety of photo-real visual effects that inspire thrilling flights of imagination.

by Barbara Robertson

Fans of Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins*, his 2005 noirish take on the Gotham superhero (played by Christian Bale), can expect more of the helmer's trademark dark seriousness in the film's much-anticipated sequel *The Dark Knight*. Sticking close to the visuals of Frank Miller's graphic novel, Nolan has once again taken extreme efforts to avoid anything that looked like facile summer movie visual effects.

The plot begins as Gotham's police lieutenant Jim Gordon (Gary Oldman) warns citizens that Batman's newfound

fame could draw evildoers to the city. And, of course, that's the cue for The Joker, played with chilling intensity by the late Heath Ledger, to enter the scene.

Speaking of the director's gritty take on the Caped Crusader's world, vfx supervisor Nick Davis notes, "It's very much his style. The idea is to create effects that don't look like visual effects at all. The key element is photo reality."

And yet, to tell a comic-book superhero story, the film needs visual effects and *Dark Knight* had approximately 700 visual effects shots. Framestore CFC,

Double Negative in London and BUF in Paris contributed the majority of these shots. In addition, London-based Cinesite handled rig removal clean-up for the complicated mechanical effects. New Deal studios shot miniatures, Nvizage at Pinewood Studios in the U.K. worked with the director, Davis, and special effects supervisor, Chris Corbould, to previsualize shots.

"Chris [Nolan] is not a big fan of using pre-viz in a creative way," Davis says, "although he's happy to use it in a technical way." Nolan used pre-viz, for example, to determine which buildings the studios would add in CG and design technical layouts. Pre-viz also helped a professional demolition company plan a massive building explosion that had no digital effects at all.

To help create the visceral photorealistic feel Nolan wanted for digital effects,

the visual effects studios created their worlds by matching something real from the physical world as often as possible.

For example, in this film Batman rides a Bat Pod, an amped-up motorcycle, rather than the "tumbler," his Batmobile. So, when a shot with the superhero on his bike needed to be digital, the effects team always had reference footage of a stuntman doing a version of the shot on a real bike, even if the real stunt happened in much slower motion.

Similarly, the effects teams grounded the virtual camera in reality. "For every shot with a digital camera move, we tracked the move from live-action cameras to give it the same feeling; the knocks, jiggles and wobbles that naturally occur," Davis says. "We always had something to match to."

The production units filmed *Dark Knight*

er. At the end of the sequence, a C130 transport plane flies by, drops a skyhook and the caped crusader snaps on.

To assemble the shots, the crew used green-screen footage of a stuntman shot on a set in Cardington, plates that Davis and a crew shot from the top of the IFC building, helicopter footage shot in Hong Kong, miniatures shot in Los Angeles, CG buildings that Framestore CFC created in London and footage of a real C130 transport plane.

In addition to the Hong Kong sequence, Framestore CFC also created approximately 120 shots that turned Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) into the horrific Harvey Two Face. "We wanted to do something completely different," Davis says.

The main post house on the show, however, was Double Negative, where the crew created digital Batman, an en-

tire CG version of the Staten Island Ferry—which, of course, doesn't exist in Chicago where the film was shot—and an entirely CG Prewitt Building. Based on the Trump Tower in Chicago, the building houses a complex sequence that included approximately 250 shots. Nolan filmed all the green-screen footage for that sequence on stages in IMAX format.

"It was a huge amount of work to deal with these much larger resolution images," Davis says. "And they had complicated shots with a CG Batman, CG characters, CG Gotham outside the green-screen windows."

The same types of elements came into play for Double Negative on shots during a movie penthouse party. During the sequence, Batman dives to save a character who is thrown out a window. But, Nolan filmed the sequence in the ground floor lobby of a building in Chicago. Creating the sequence involved complicated green-screen footage, CG character work, digital environments and live-action footage shot in Chicago with digital set extensions. At the end of the fall, the characters land on a live-action taxi.

In addition to the digital environments and CG character work at Framestore CFC and Double Negative, BUF contributed a major effect that appears throughout the film: Batman's new sonar vision. "It's a 3D gag that BUF designed and invented," says Davis. "Batman can take all the mobile phone signals, translate them into sonar and use that to spy on every person in Gotham." To represent sonar vision, BUF built Gotham City as a 3D model that we see on monitors and through Batman's eyes, several characters and the Prewitt building.

Although we can see this digital representation of Gotham City through Batman's eyes, if Nolan and the visual effects studios accomplish their goals, that will be the only element in the film that we recognize as digital.

"This film was a big challenge," says Davis. "But working with Chris is great. You don't have to do things 10 different ways to try to please him. He knows exactly what he wants." ■

Warner Bros.' *The Dark Knight* will be released in U.S. theaters on July 18.



"For every shot with a digital camera move, we tracked the move from live-action cameras to give it the same feeling; the knocks, jiggles and wobbles that naturally occur. We always had something to match to."



—Nick Davis, *The Dark Knight's* vfx supervisor

in Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Chicago and the U.K., sometimes moving from green-screen shoots with stunt men in Cardington, England to location shots with the principal actors in Hong Kong.

Framestore CFC handled a sequence that takes place in Hong Kong where Batman has traveled to extract a key villain's money launderer. In these shots, Batman leaps from the 1,600-foot tall IFC building in Hong Kong, flies through the city to a lower building and smashes through the window of another skyscrap-

er. At the end of the sequence, a C130 transport plane flies by, drops a skyhook and the caped crusader snaps on.

"Double Negative did a lot of work for a chase scene with digital vehicles and a digital Bat Pod," Davis says. "For that, they built the whole LaSalle Street in Chicago in CG using sophisticated projection techniques to make sure the entire CG backdrops were created from real plates and photographic textures. It enabled us to put CG vehicles into the shots and exactly match the lighting and pho-



Gold Medal-winner Nicole Mitchell's *Zoologic*.

Oscar's Student Club

Up close and personal with this year's Student Academy Award winners. **by Ellen Wolff**

A hapless zookeeper, a one-eyed robot searching for a flower and a myopic frog grappling with contact lenses were the stars of this year's Student Academy Award-winning animated films. They were, respectively, the creations of Gold Medal winner Nicole Mitchell (*Zoologic*), Silver Medal winner Tatchapon Lertwirojkul (*Simulacra*) and Bronze Medal winner Evan Mayfield (*The Visionary*). For the 35th year, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences hosted this annual competition, and these winners in the animation category were among a dozen student filmmakers who were flown to Los Angeles for a week of celebratory events. In addition, they were awarded prizes of \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000 respectively.

For Mitchell, a California native who got her BA in 2007 from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, it was a local jaunt. She's already employed in the story development department at Disney's Burbank studios, which has placed her in meetings with creative chief John Lasseter,

a two-time Student Oscar winner himself for his CalArts films. Mitchell appreciates that she's part of a legacy of CalArts grads that have succeeded as professional animators, including several at Disney. "The people who come out of CalArts are very connected, and they stay connected. There's definitely a bond. People can graduate at different years, but as soon as they find out you're from CalArts, they become instant friends."

While many of Mitchell's fellow alums have pioneered 3D computer animation, Mitchell's first love is hand-drawn animation. Her 2D film *Zoologic* uses sparse lines and a watercolor-wash style that's reminiscent of a children's book. "It looks simple but it's actually very challenging," she says. "You think it would be easier, but when there are so few lines to communicate something, you have to choose them well. A lot of people want to really impress with their animation, so they'll focus on incredible character animation and not really put as much time into creating backgrounds or a

completed-looking film."

Zoologic probably scored with the Academy judges because it does tell a complete story of a zookeeper who tries in vain to control the animals *his* way—with comedic results. Mitchell did most of the film herself over a year's time, getting help only with some in-betweening and with music and sound. She composited her artwork with Adobe After Effects and Apple Final Cut Pro, and laid in final color with Adobe Photoshop. While Mitchell's current job has introduced her to CG, she says, "Disney does have a lot going on in 2D right now. There are several shorts programs, so if I present them with something they like, they might do something with it."

This year's Silver Medal winner, Thai native Tatchapon Lertwirojkul, is also a working animator in New York City, where he got his MFA from the School of Visual Arts. His CG-animated thesis film *Simulacra* follows a robot on a search for organic life in a vast metallic world. The film's intricate cityscapes presented massive animation and rendering challenges for Tatch, who spent eight months creating the film using Autodesk Maya and 3ds Max. "During the last two months, I'd wake up at 3 a.m. and work until midnight. My friends would call to

continued on page 58



CHOOSE THE enchanted³ path

The Programs

All Animation & Visual Effects programs at Vancouver Film School focus on telling a great story through movement. Choose your discipline: 3D Animation & Visual Effects, Classical Animation, and Digital Character Animation.

The Leader

The Animation & Visual Effects programs at VFS are led by industry veteran Larry Bafia, who was Animation Supervisor at PDI/Dreamworks and worked on hits like *Antz* and *Mission Impossible II*.

The Process

Under the guidance of industry pioneers, you will work and learn in a studio setting, and create a demo reel or film of your own. When you graduate, you're ready to work in a production team.

The Results

VFS animation is all around you. Every year our graduates start careers at the world's best production studios. You've seen their work in *Iron Man*, *Horton Hears a Who*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Halo 3*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Lost*, and *Battlestar Galactica*.

The Next Step

Visit vfs.com/animationvfx to learn more about our programs, or vfs.com to speak to an advisor now.

VFS ANIMATION
& VISUAL EFFECTS

VFS student work by Zheng Tang



Tatchapon Lertwirojkul's *Simulacra*.

ask if I was still alive.

"After graduation a friend handed my thesis to the commercial company Psyops," he recalls. "They were working on top-notch commercials in New York, and I got a chance to work on the Coca-Cola 'Happiness Factory' spot, which was amazing. I'm still working on commercials in New York and building my demo reel, and I'm applying for a visa to work anywhere I want. I'd like to try feature animation if I have the chance."

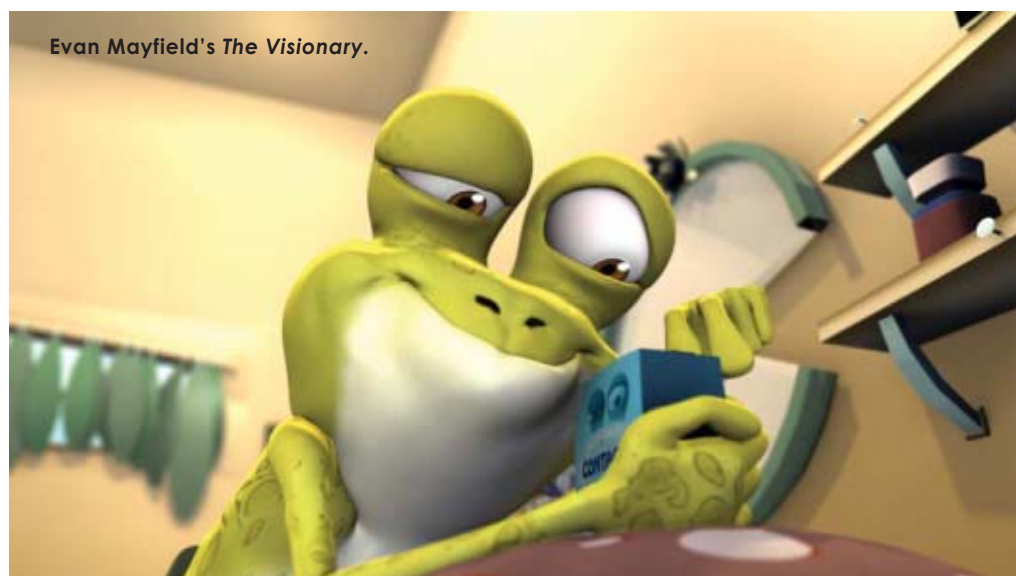
Tatch credits Blue Sky Studios' movie *Robots* with convincing him that his metallic star in *Simulacra* could be animated with appealing facial expressions, and Blue Sky's animation also inspired the creator of this year's Bronze Medal winner, the CG-animated project *The Visionary*. Evan Mansfield, who recently graduated from Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, recalls watching Sid the Sloth from *Ice Age*—a character whose eyes are hugely expressive. "I started thinking about personal things that I could put into my film," he explains. Mansfield had grown up wearing eyeglasses, and he thought that the awkward switch to contact lenses had comic potential. Watching Sid the Sloth helped Mayfield home in on his ideal character—a bullfrog with bulging eyes.

The Visionary depicts the frog's Chaplinesque struggle to insert contact lenses, a task for which his webbed feet and suction-cup tongue are ill-suited. "A lot of the physical issues involved with putting in contacts are very small," notes Mayfield. "So I had to find a way to make those bigger and relatable, and still applicable to a frog trying to put them in. It was very challenging to make it cartoony and broad, but I had a blast doing it."

Mayfield spent a full year-and-a-half animating *The Visionary* in Autodesk Maya and rendering it with Pixar's RenderMan.

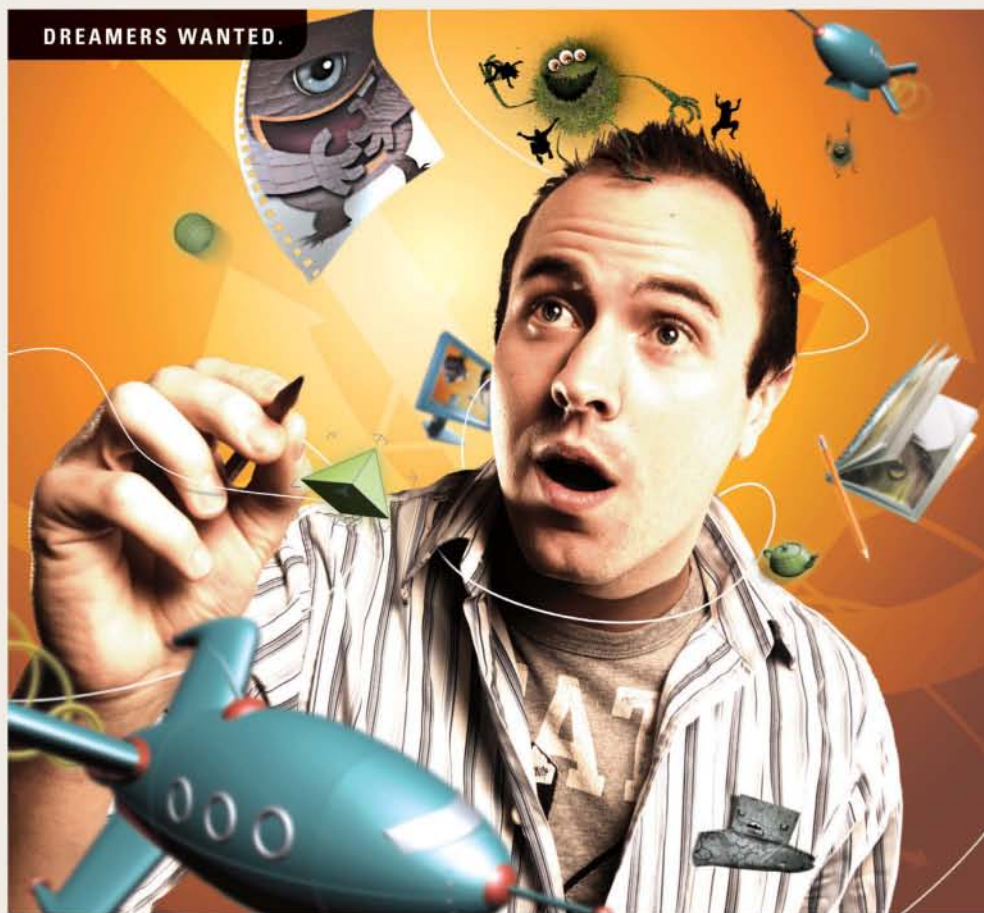
The film garnered immediate attention from recruiters from Sony Animation and Nickelodeon, both of which offered animation jobs to Mayfield. After traveling to Los Angeles for the first time from his home state of Alabama to attend the Student Academy Awards, he'll decide where he'll begin working this fall. "During four years of college, I didn't do much except work my butt off. But now I'll get to enjoy doing something I love to do." ■

Ellen Wolff is a Los Angeles-based journalist who specializes in visual effects, CG animation and education.



Evan Mayfield's *The Visionary*.

DREAMERS WANTED.



SCHOOL OF COMPUTER ANIMATION

DIGITAL ARTS & DESIGN > FILM > GAME DEVELOPMENT > MUSIC BUSINESS > RECORDING ARTS > SHOW PRODUCTION & TOURING

Financial aid available to those who qualify • Career development assistance • Accredited School, ACCSCT

ONE OF THE
TOP TEN
NEW-MEDIA
SCHOOLS
— Shift Magazine

FULL SAIL
Real World Education

800.226.7625
3300 University Boulevard
Winter Park, FL 32792

fullsail.com

© 2007 Full Sail Inc. All rights reserved.

We cover the Business, Technology & Art of Animation!

Animation Magazine delivers information
about companies, executives, trends,
properties and projects
from around the world.



**Animation Magazine is now
available in a digital format.**

For more information on advertising or subscribing,
go to www.animationmagazine.net or call 818-991-2884.



Animation in real time... real fast... real simple... real sharp!

No mouse. No computer. No hassles. Introducing the new LunchBox DV.

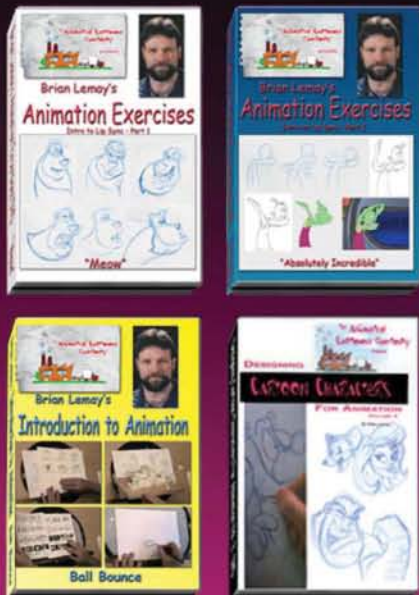
To engage elementary students,
equipment must be simple. To motivate
high school students, feedback must
be instantaneous. To support college
students, tools must be powerful.
Professionals and schools worldwide
know that the LunchBox DV is the
standard for learning animation.
No strings attached. Call or visit us
on the web to find out more.



North America: 1.877.625.6438
Facsimile: 1.503.925.0221
Japan: MediaLink 81.471.86.1061
Korea: 70.7012.5059
Elsewhere: 1.503.625.6438

www.animationtoolworks.com





Animation Instruction DVD's by Brian Lemay

Great for animation students of any level.
Animation instruction books on Layout,
Character Design, Storyboarding, and
Animation theory, all available now.
Simply visit our website for ordering info
and lots of other things.

www.brianlemay.com

COMIC ARTIST

supplies.com

"We have the tools - You provide the talent!"



**ART BOARDS, HOW-TO-BOOKS, DISPLAYS,
ERASERS, MANGA SUPPLIES, MARKERS, PENS,
PENCILS, PORTFOLIOS, SKETCHBOOKS,
SOFTWARE, STORAGE GEAR, & MORE!**

Sign up for e-mail updates to receive information about
our special offers, discounts and more!

sales@bcmylar.com

COMICARTISTSUPPLIES.COM

A Division of Bill Cole Enterprises, Inc.



www.animationmagazine.net



ANIMATION SUPPLIES

*The Complete Source for
All Your Animation Needs!*

- Everything for the Professional & Amateur
- Wholesale Prices / Most Orders Shipped the Same Day

FAST, RELIABLE
WORLDWIDE
SERVICE

CARTOON



colour
COMPANY, INC.
Est. 1947

Featuring Our Own...

GEL-VINYL PAINTS
and Acrylic Animation Discs

LARGEST SELECTION OF ANIMATION
BOND & ACETATE ANYWHERE!



©310/838-8467 • 800/523-3665 FAX 310/838-2531
9024 Lindblade Street, Culver City, CA 90232

www.cartooncolour.com



Lightfoot Ltd, inc.

Animation Supplies at a Discount!

AnimationSupplies.com

School PO's Accepted
Teacher Workshops

PUNCHED ANIMATION PAPER \$10.95

- Lesson Plans
- Round Pegbars
- Acme Pegbars
- Hole Punches
- Lightboxes
- Software
- Pro Discs
- Pencils
- Animation Kits
- Starter Kits
- Header Strips
- Pencil Testers

(951)693-5165

(951)693-5166 fax

*Free Quotes for Schools

www.LightfootLtd.com

www.CartoonSupplies.com

www.AnimationSupplies.com

STUDENTS EDUCATORS SCHOOLS

Save on
Thousands
of Popular
Software
Titles!

- Adobe
- Autodesk
- Avid
- Boris
- Corel
- NewTek
- Maxon
- Pixologic
- Much More!



FREE CATALOG AVAILABLE

www.JourneyEd.com

1.800.874.9001

journeyEd
.com



PHOTOS FROM '07 INAUGURAL SHOW

e for all™
POWER UP & PLAY

EXPERIENCE & TEST DRIVE
THE LATEST AND BEST
VIDEO GAMES, A GAME
GADGETS, N D G E A R
VIDEO GAME TOURNAMENTS
GAME STAGES
DON'T MISS OUT ON THE
FUN AND GAMES
AT E FOR ALL 2008!
REGISTER TODAY!

OCTOBER 3-5, 2008
L.A. CONVENTION CENTER



Copyright © 2008 IDG World Expo Corp. All rights reserved.
E for All and Entertainment for All are registered trademarks of International Data Group, Inc.
All other trademarks contained herein are the property of their respective owners.

www.EforAllExpo.com

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

reports on the **BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY** and
ART of animation.

In print and online, we cover all areas of animation:



Feature films
Gaming
Television
Licensing
3D/Visual Effects
Home entertainment
Opportunities



DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

Enjoy the monthly print edition of *Animation Magazine* sent right to your computer!

Go to www.animationmagazine.net to subscribe

NOW AVAILABLE!
Our 20-Year Collector's Book.

**We Wrote the Book
on Animation!**

Now you can read about all the
talented people, features, TV series,
shorts and games that have shaped
the animation world in the past 20
years in one collector's edition.



Visit www.animationmagazine.net/book.html

Toons play a major part in the world of **Sean "Cheeks" Galloway**, character designer on Warner Bros. Animation's *The Spectacular Spider-Man*, which just completed its second season. Whether he's doing superhero "research" at his South Bay home or sketching awesome designs for the series at the production studios in Culver City, Calif., Cheeks has the kind of life Peter Parker could only dream about!



A big bowl of cereal and some early morning cartoons start Cheeks' day.



Technology in the apartment means homework is always on Cheeks' agenda.



Early Breakfast + Homework + Comics = Pre-work Nap.



Beyond the obligatory meetings & reviews, you can usually find Cheeks at his desk busily sketching away.



Color stylist Pamela Long gives Cheeks a tour of this week's characters.



Lunch is a must ... even if it's leftovers.



Producer Greg Weisman and Cheeks have a good laugh over a new design.



When reviewing artwork for the series and, in this case, the DVD cover for the series' first home entertainment release, Cheeks enjoys input from colleagues like color supervisor Joey Mason and prop designer Tae Soo Kim.



Ping-pong or a workout helps break-up the afternoon drag.



Rough sketches of Spidey and Doc Ock.



It's an open door policy at Cheeks' office.

FIGHT *for* YOUR RIGHTS!

AUTHORIZATION I. A. T. S. E. & M. P. M. O.*

I, _____, (_____) _____
(Please print your name) (Your home telephone)

of _____
(Please print your home address, city, zip)

(Please print your job classification [animator, layout, etc.]) (Your Social Security number)

authorize IATSE & MPMO* to represent me in collective bargaining and to negotiate and conclude all agreements with my employer, _____

(Name of your employer)
regarding the terms and conditions of my employment. If the union obtains an agreement with my employer, I understand that I am free to negotiate more desirable terms on an individual basis. I understand that when the majority of employees authorize union representation, recognition from my employer may be obtained without an election.

X _____
(Please sign here) (Today's date)

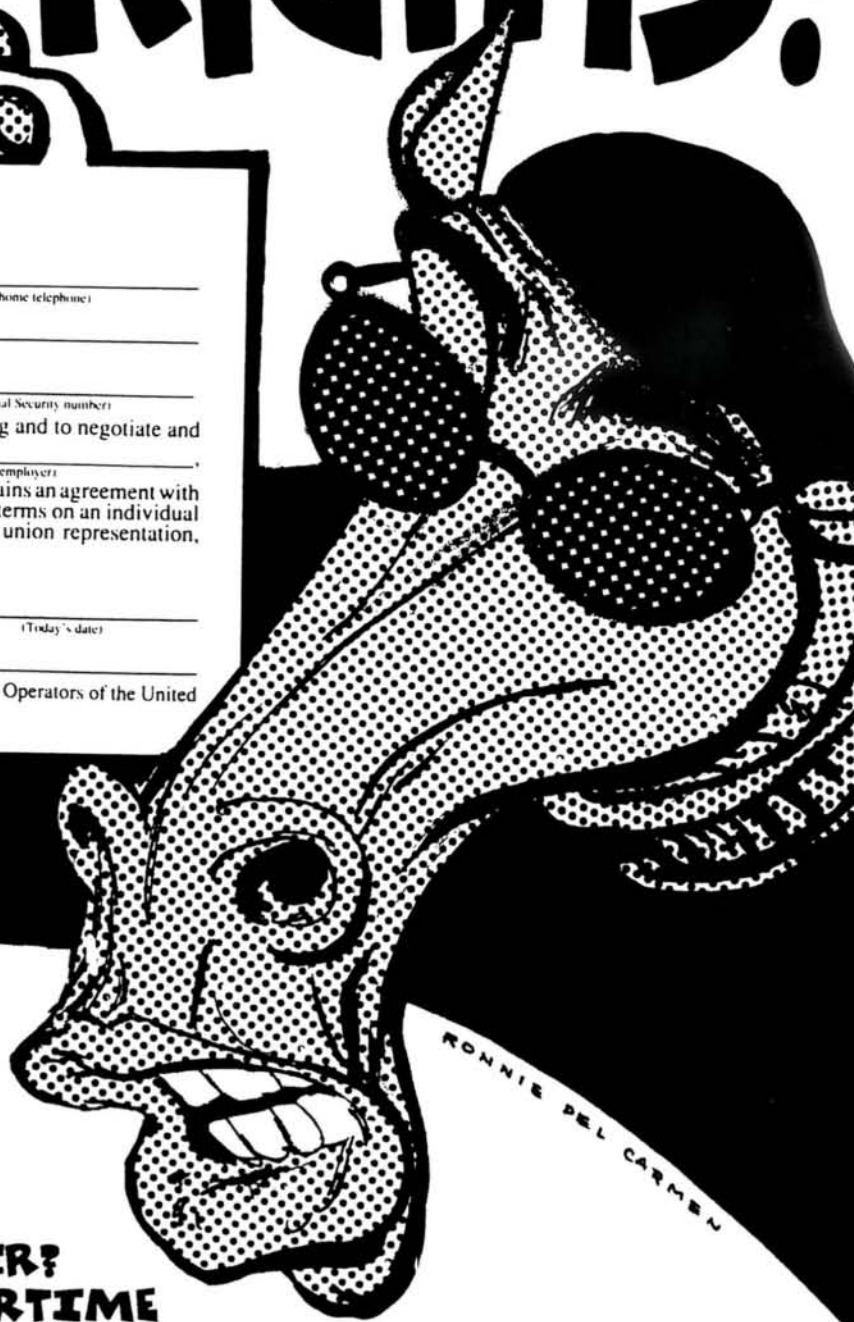
Received by: _____

*International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Machine Operators of the United States and Canada, AFL-CIO

With This!

**ARE YOU SICK AND
TIRED OF BEING ABUSED BY
YOUR NON-UNION EMPLOYER?
FED UP WITH WORKING OVERTIME
WITHOUT PAY? THE MEANS TO SAVE YOUR
CAREER IS ON THIS PAGE. FILL OUT THE
ABOVE CARD AND MAIL IT TO: M.P.S.C. LOCAL
839, 4729 LANKERSHIM BLVD., NORTH HOLLYWOOD,
CA 91602. IT'S YOUR FUTURE!**

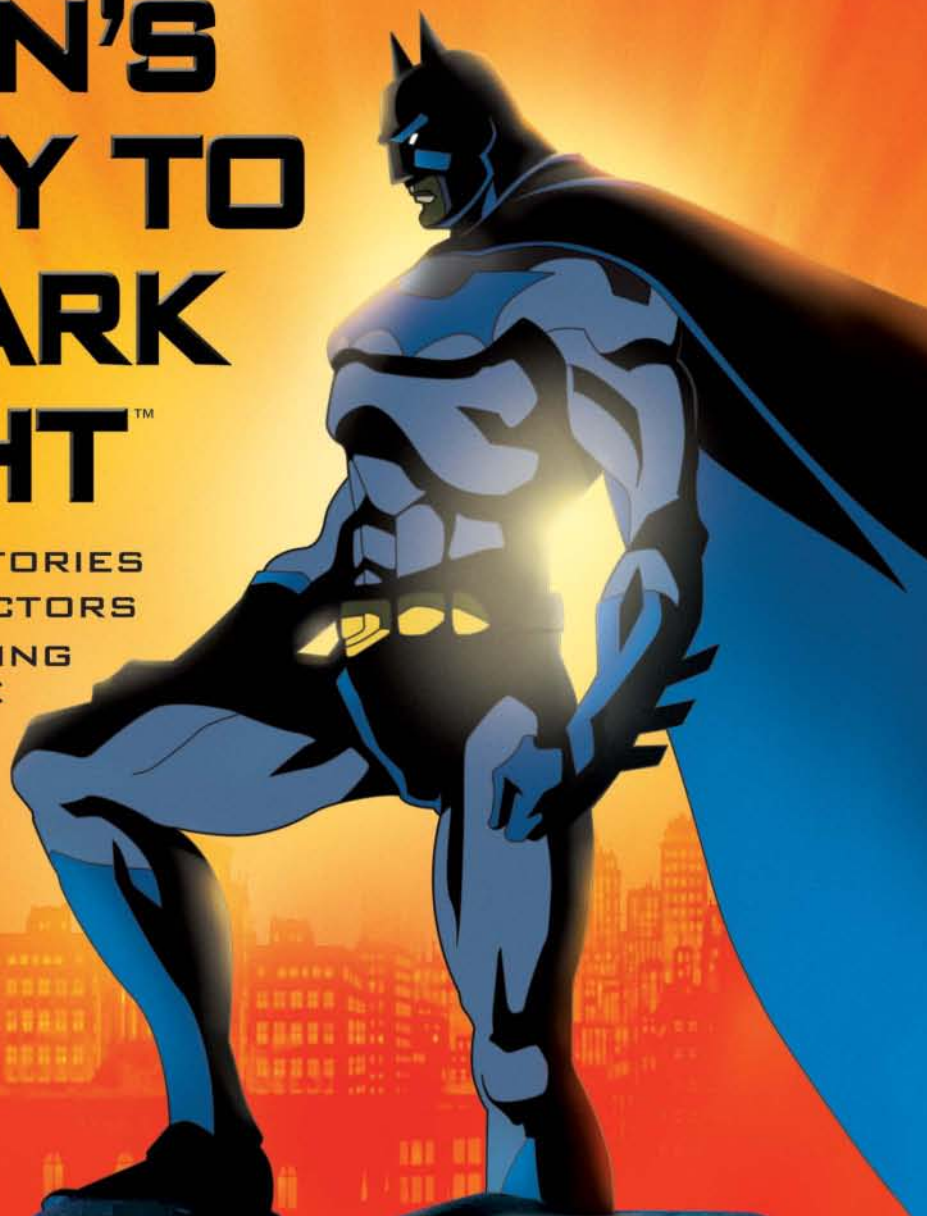
CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE AT <http://www.mpsc839.org/mpsc839>



RONNIE DEL CARMEN

WITNESS BATMAN'S JOURNEY TO THE DARK KNIGHT™

6 INTERLOCKING STORIES
6 ACCLAIMED DIRECTORS
1 GROUNDBREAKING
MASTERPIECE



SEE THE MOVIE
ON DVD, BLU-RAY
AND ON DEMAND

SEE THE DARK KNIGHT™
IN THEATERS THIS SUMMER



batmangothamknight.com dccomics.com wbhidef.com warnervideo.com



BATMAN and All Related Characters and Elements Are Trademarks of and © DC Comics.
© 2008 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.



PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
Stylized Violence, Including Some Bloody Images
Bonus Material/Trailer Not Rated.